The Sceptre and the Sextant: Imperialism and Scientism in the Travelogues of Johan Nieuhof, Lord George Macartney, and A.E. van Braam Houckgeest

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I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

Signature: ……..

Abstract

In this paper, I discuss the interrelation between scientism and imperialism, as it plays out in three milestone travelogues written on China in the 17th and 18th centuries; namely, the travelogues of Johan Nieuhof (1669), Lord George Macartney (1797), and Andreas Everard van braam Houckgeest (1798). Understanding the lasting significance of these texts, I argue, requires placing them – and by extension the embassies which originated them – in context of the burgeoning scientific ideology of their era. To do this, I will first introduce my key texts, and argue for why I believe they can be considered sites of inquiry into the impact of scientific ideology upon Western European conceptions of China. Then I will discuss in more detail my theoretical framework, its derivation, my exegetical methodology, and my justifications for making such an analysis of Nieuhof, Macartney, and Houckgeest. Then, to set the stage for the close readings to come, I will consider the comparative levels of scientific and technological sophistication in Western Europe and China during the long 18th century, as well as the current state of this academic discourse itself, by reviewing various essential works on the subject. In my second chapter, I will perform my analysis of Nieuhof's travelogue. In my third, I will overview a selection of texts by Sir William Temple, who will be considered as an ideological foil to Nieuhof. In chapters four and five, I will analyse the travelogues of Lord George Macartney and A.E. van Braam Houckgeest respectively, extending to them the methodology already applied to Nieuhof. Then in chapter six, I will briefly set aside my diplomats to address historian of the book Benjamin Schmidt's critique of author-focused exegeses of premodern Dutch travel literature – a critique which, in calling into question the legitimacy of analyses like my own, demands address. I will overview my exegeses and suggest avenues for future research in chapter seven. And finally, in my epilogue, I will conclude my thesis by briefly sketching an example of how the relationship between early modern scientism and imperialism continued to develop into the 19th century.

Acknowledgements

There are few things as fraught as writing acknowledgements, let us be completely clear about that. Not many people will read them, and those that do – those to whom they are dedicated – often cannot fully fathom them (if through no fault of their own). Words, it seems, always say more than they mean and less than they intend. You'd think a scholar of literature would come to understand that very early in their career, but I find I am relearning it all the time.

Still, I would be remiss not to acknowledge, first of all, my immense gratitude to Dr. Yue Zhuang for her help in guiding my research; including, significantly, pushing me out of my academic comfort zone, and encouraging me to situate my analysis – which began as a fairly straightforward, self-contained set of close readings – within a larger historical context. My intuition on the amenability of scientism to the imperialist conceits of Lord George Macartney and Johan Nieuhof specifically, under Dr. Zhuang's guidance eventually began to take shape as a broader commentary on the role of scientism as a foundational architecture of the premodern Western European imaginary. Her encyclopedic knowledge of the intellectuals and intellectual history of this period has been absolutely essential, and her unflagging faith in my thesis (and ability to execute it) have meant more to me than I really know how to articulate. Thank you, Yue. And I hereby absolve you of responsibility for any remaining flaws in my analysis; they are completely my own.

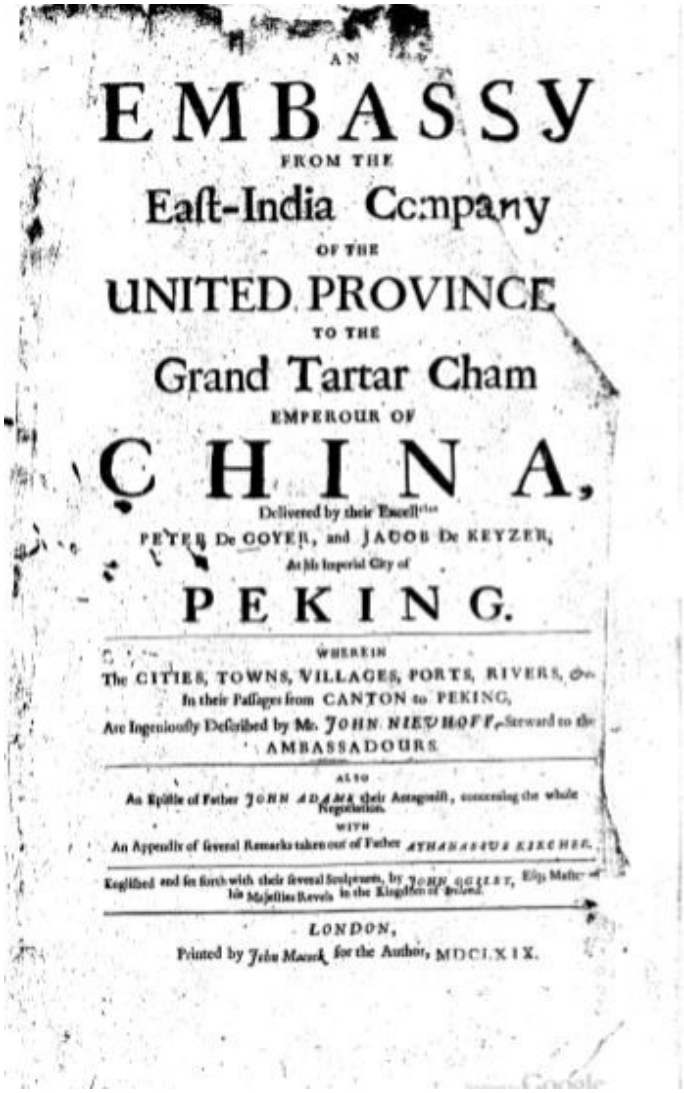
I am also indebted to: the instructive critiques I have received over the years from Dr. Gert Vonhoff, Dr. Zhiguang Yin, and Dr. Emma Cayley; the comradeship and support of fellow PhD Maria Anesti; Dr. Michael Adas' invaluable advice, following my *viva voce*, on how to improve the structure of my thesis; and, not leastly, as a former university administrator myself, the efforts of all the University of Exeter administrators and IT staff working tirelessly and thanklessly behind the scenes.

And finally, I would like to give a special thanks to my Uncle Hugh and Aunt Chris, whose support came to me at a most critical time, making this entire endeavour possible.

Images

Figure 1. Engraving from Johan Nieuhof's *An Embassy from the East India Company, etc.*

(London, 1669).



AN

EMBASSY

FROM THE

East-India Company

OF THE

UNITED PROVINCE

TO THE

Grand Tartar Cham

EMPEROUR OF

CHINA,

Delivered by their Excell^cies

PETER De GOYER, and JACOB De KEYZER,

At his Imperial City of

PEKING.

WHEREIN

The CITIES, TOWNS, VILLAGES, PORTS, RIVERS, &c.

In their Paſſages from CANTON to PEKING,

Are Ingeniouſly Deſcribed by Mr. JOHN NIEUHOFF, Steward to the AMBASSADOURS.

ALSO

An Epiſtle of Father JOHN ADAMS their Antagoniſt, concerning the whole Negotiation.

WITH

An Appendix of ſeveral Remarks taken out of Father ATHANASIUS KIRCHER.

Engliſhed and ſet forth with their ſeveral Sculptures, by JOHN OGILBY, Eſq; Maſter of his Majeſties Revels in the Kingdom of Ireland.

LONDON,

Printed by John Macock, for the Author, MDCLXIX.

Figure 2. Title page from Johan Nieuhof's *An Embassy from the East India Company, etc.* (London, 1669).

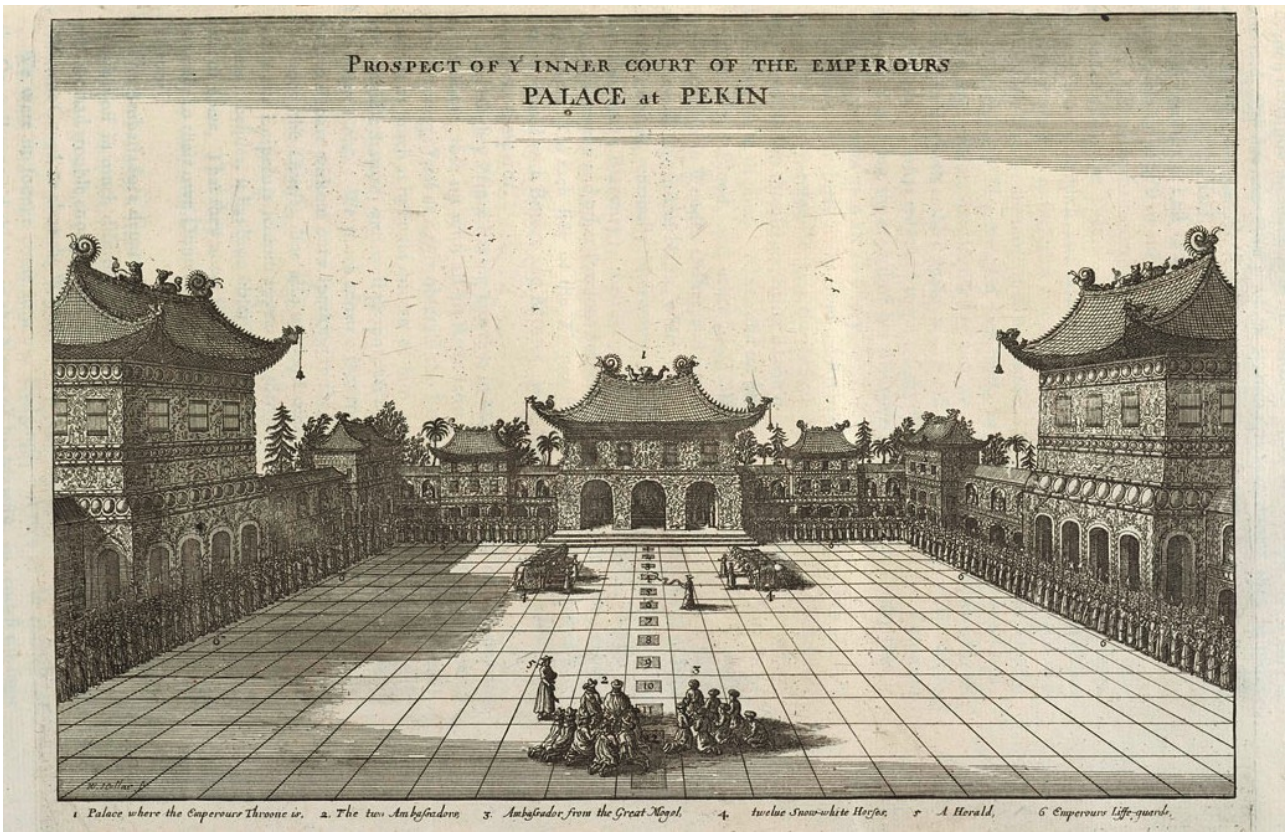


Figure 3. Engraving from Johan Nieuhof's *An Embassy from the East India Company, etc.* (London, 1669).

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The Sceptre and the Sextant: Imperialism and Scientism in the Travelogues of Johan Nieuhof, Lord George Macartney, and A.E. van Braam Houckgeest

Chapter One: The premodern diplomatic travelogue (and three in particular)

In the 17th and 18th centuries, a small but influential body of travelogues arose from Europe's diplomatic intercourse with what was then the largest and wealthiest polity on earth: China. Beginning from the assumption that the popularity these texts enjoyed in their respective heydays speaks to their relevance as barometers of premodern European attitudes, towards China in particular, I have chosen three of the best-known for close reading. Specifically, the travelogues of Johann Nieuhof, Lord George Macartney, and A. E. van Braam Houckgeest. With Nieuhof's travelogue first finding publication in the mid-17th century, and Macartney's and Houckgeest's finding the same at the end of the 18th, these accounts span a significant stretch of European history; a period which covers the, as it is popularly known, scientific revolution, against which I believe they must be read. In addition to these, I shall also more briefly consider the work of one Sir William Temple, a rough contemporary of Nieuhof's, whose views on both China and the burgeoning field of "natural philosophy" form a useful contrast to the ideological lineage represented by the former authors.[1]

I will make my exegesis as follows: first, I will introduce my key texts, and argue for why I believe that can be considered sites of inquiry into the impact of scientific ideology upon Western European conceptions of China. Most of this first section of my introduction will deal with administrative functions: providing context for the chapters to follow, introducing terms, and establishing the most direct scholastic antecedents to my own research. In my next section, "Sceptres and Sextants," I will discuss in more detail my theoretical framework, its derivation, my exegetical methodology (i.e. thematic and

1. A bit of conceptual anatomy: I will note here that, for the purposes of this thesis, and to avoid the tedium of repetition, I will be using the words "travelogue," "travel book," "account," "work," and etc. interchangeably to refer to the sum total of paratexts, main text, and accompanying illustrations that comprised the final commodified form of the publications specified (and will note exact editions as this becomes pertinent). I will, however, reserve the word "text" to refer specifically to the non-paratextual written content of these travelogues, and further specify the word "journal" to refer to only the dated, journal-entry portions of texts. These distinctions will become important in later chapters.

semantic scientism), and my justifications for making such an analysis of Nieuhof, Macartney, and Houckgeest. Next, in “Premodern Techne, East and West,” I will consider the comparative levels of scientific and technological sophistication in Western Europe and China during the long 18th century. To do this, I will review essential existent scholarship on the topic, in the process situating my own thesis in relation to this body of research. In my second chapter, I will perform my analysis of Nieuhof's travelogue. In my third, I will overview a selection of texts by Sir William Temple, who will be considered as an ideological foil most obviously to Nieuhof, but ultimately to Macartney and Houckgeest as well. In chapters four and five, I will analyse the travelogues of Lord George Macartney and A.E. van Braam Houckgeest respectively, extending to them the methodology already applied to Nieuhof. Then in chapter six, I will set aside my diplomats to address historian of the book Benjamin Schmidt's critique of author-focused exegeses of premodern Dutch travel literature. I will overview my exegeses and suggest avenues for future research in chapter seven. And finally, in my epilogue, I will conclude my thesis by briefly sketching an example of how the relationship between early modern scientism and imperialism continued to develop into the 19th century.

Although otherwise divers, the three works I have chosen to close read here share a number of striking similarities. Similarities which, I submit, speak to the far-reaching ramifications of the increasing institutionalization of science in premodern Western Europe, and subsequently, increasing importance of scientific ideology to the Western European cultural imaginary. As Michael Adas has argued in his *Machines as the Measure of Men* (2014):

> From the very first decades of overseas expansion in the fifteenth century, European explorers and missionaries displayed great interest in the ships, tools, weapons, and engineering techniques of the societies they encountered. They often compared these with their own, and increasingly regarded technological and scientific accomplishments as significant measures of the overall level of development attained by non-Western cultures. By the mid-eighteenth century, scientific and technological gauges were playing a major and at times dominant role in European thinking about such civilizations as India and China... (3)

Adas' monograph is not concerned with only the premodern period, but his capacious research spans it, and his overarching argument forms perhaps the most foundational premise of the current thesis. Certainly, his analysis rings true of Nieuhof, Macartney, and Houckgeest, all of whom are uniformly painstaking in their attention to the presumed state

of Chinese scientific understanding, as well as to various Chinese technologies. Their relative interest in various expressions of the latter differs somewhat, as we shall see in their respective chapters, but besides those that Adas lists, I would also add agriculture, sericulture, and ceramic production as three (albeit non-exhaustive) examples of technological fields that receive minute, repeated scrutiny in all three diplomats' works. Moreover, wherever awe at Chinese ingenuity is present, attempted appropriation can usually be expected. These works' explicit preoccupation with Chinese science and technology – which I designate “thematic scientism,” and will discuss in greater depth in the next section – points, I believe, to certain common ideological assumptions shared amongst the travelogues. It also confirms Adas' argument that the premodern period can be characterised by a disposition towards foreign cultures increasingly defined by the terms and valorisation of rationalistic Western science; one whose perhaps unexpected role in Sino-European relations modern scholarship is only beginning to recover.

But moreover, it is not only these works' thematic focus on Chinese technology that suggests a shared ideological basis, but also their similar *stylistic* qualities. Qualities such as a self-conscious regard for the objectivity and precision of their observations; a (perhaps consequent) reliance on measurements and taxonomical lists; and a compulsive need to not merely describe, but explain Chinese culture – and, quite prominently, its *techne*[2] – in terms of underlying causal principles. These stylistic convergences I include under the heading “semantic scientism”; and although semantic scientism is not flatly equivalent to thematic scientism, it is derived from the same originating ideology, and frequently deployed simultaneous to it. To my knowledge, this semantic scientism has not been previously considered by any scholars of premodern travel writing, and it is here particularly that I hope to make an original methodological contribution to my topic.

By unpacking the texts of Nieuhof, Temple, Macartney and Houckgeest in relation to scientism, both thematically and semantically, I hope to shed light on the role that premodern European scientism had, and no doubt continues to have, in shaping Western European conceptions of China. Indeed, what ultimately makes our diplomats' invocations of scientific endeavour and deployments of scientific language *scientistic* rather than *scientific* is that disinterested inquiry into Chinese culture was never their embassies'

2. More conceptual taxonomy: while I do, strictly speaking, acknowledge a distinction between techne and technology – where “techne” refers to the sum of a culturally-embedded, living body of knowledge on, say, a field of manufacture (like Chinese ceramic-making), and “technology” refers to a specific instantiation of a techne (like Southeastern China's famous Dragon kilns), by and large, the academic inflections of this distinction will not be important to my exegesis. For more information on Dragon kilns, see Kerr and Wood (347-351).

primary goal. Access to Chinese goods, through either the negotiation of relaxed trade restrictions, or as the end result of technological appropriation, was. All other goals were prioritized behind this. But science mobilized to – or conducted in the shadow of – such an agenda is not mere science. I leave aside the question of whether “pure” science exists in any case; but it will certainly not be found in the travelogues under study here.

This means that I will of necessity be considering the relationship between scientism and imperialism. Nieuhof, Macartney, and Houckgeest were all imperial agents; all belonged to embassies officially tasked with recording their travels in China and encounters with the Chinese – not for the sake of charming anecdotes, but as works of imperial reconnaissance and appropriation. It is true that the ideological impetus behind each of their embassies might be argued to be more precisely described as mercantilist, given the predominantly economic goals of the embassies and various trading company associations of the diplomats. Nonetheless, Nieuhof, Macartney, and Houckgeest each executed their diplomatic functions under the aegis of a sponsoring government that felt compelled to pay considerable lip service to the extra-economic motivations for their dispatches. To account for this, it seems more appropriate to speak of “imperialism” than to reduce their embassies to economic terms alone. Incidentally, this is also why I will, moving forward, feel free to use the term “imperialism” in reference to my Dutch authors, who technically acted on behalf of a Republic. The governmental architecture of the 17th and 18th century Dutch may have been novel, but their engagements with the non-European world, compared against their British brethren, were not.

Meeting the boys: Nieuhof, Macartney, Houckgeest (and Temple)

Which leads us to the books at hand. In order of their English-language publication: Johan Nieuhof's *An Embassy from the East India Company of the United Provinces, to the Grand Tartar Cham, Emperor of China, etc.* (1669); Lord George Macartney's *An Embassy to China, Being the Journal Kept by Lord George Macartney during his Embassy to the Emperor Chi'en-lung, 1793-1794* (1797); and Andreas Everardus van Braam Houckgeest's *An Authentic Account of the Embassy of the Dutch East India Company to the Court of the Emperor of China, In the Years 1794 and 1795* (1798), were all productions of ambassadorial missions to China during the lengthy Qing dynasty (1644-1912). Not an ambassador himself, Nieuhof served rather as secretary to Peter de Goyer and Jacob de Keyzer during their 1655 embassy to China. He was charged by the administrators of the

journey, the VOC (*Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie*), or Dutch East India Company, with writing the embassy's official account (Dawn Odell, Soul of Transactions, 224). The task of actually publishing this manuscript, however, Nieuhof delegated to his brother, Hendrick, who sold it circa 1664 to Dutch publishing magnate Jacob van Meurs (Benjamin Schmidt, 24). Spurred by a confident Dutch Republic's mercantile pretensions during the flowering of its Golden Age, de Goyer and de Keyzer's mission intended to secure trading concessions for the Dutch from a Qing government that at that time favoured the Portuguese. They failed at this (although the Shunzhi Emperor kindly invited the Dutch back again in eight years' time), but Nieuhof, at least, managed to benefit from the publication of his embassy's adventures. As Dawn Odell's (2001) research has discussed, Nieuhof's work, especially notable for its detailed illustrations[3], was subsequently published by the VOC as propaganda portraying the monopoly as a “masterful mercantile force in Asia” (Soul of Transactions, 242); one as skilled in amassing knowledge *about* far-off peoples as trade goods *from* them, and therefore a vital cultural institution. Nieuhof's travelogue was first published in 1665, in Dutch (in which language its formidable full title is fondly abbreviated to *Het Gezantschap*; in English, “The Embassy”), and the crisp, realistic pictures of China and the Chinese that accompanied it became the direct visual inspiration of much subsequent chinoiserie.[4] The book was an immediate success, establishing Nieuhof in Europe as an authority on Chinese culture. Successive editions were published in French, German, Latin, and lastly English. But Nieuhof's travelogue impacted more than just European aesthetics; as one of the earliest accounts of China to achieve significant circulation in Europe, it helped to define premodern Western conceptions of China generally. More concretely, it also helped establish the reputation of original publisher Jacob van Meurs, to whom the Dutch Republic granted sole publishing rights, in three languages, for 15 years (Sun, 5). Its popularity inadvertently initiated a tradition of Dutch dominance in the production of geography and natural history books that, as Benjamin Schmidt (2015) has detailed at length, would span generations. As a book of such well-documented historical importance, Nieuhof's travelogue makes an essential entry to the premodern cannon of European Sinological writings.

Lord George Macartney's name will, of course, be familiar as belonging to King

3. I will be discussing one of these in depth: the van Meurs frontispiece that was also used in Ogilby's English language translation of Nieuhof. For a more thorough assay of the imagery in Nieuhof's text, I defer to Dawn Odell, “Soul of Transactions”; Benjamin Schmidt, *Inventing Exoticism*; and Jing Sun's “The Illusion of Verisimilitude: Johan Nieuhof's Images of China.”

4. See Edwin J. Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*.

George III's ambassador – *that* ambassador – whose refusal to kowtow before the Qianlong Emperor provoked such a furore amongst British commentators that it continues to dominate Sino-British scholarship to this day.[5] Peter J. Kitson (2013), in fact, in his *Forging Romantic China*, deems Macartney's meeting with Qianlong as in no uncertain terms “the primal scene of the encounter with China in the British imagination” (204). Kitson's monograph traces the evolution of the Chinese trope through its various incarnations in British letters, plays, drawings, and domestic goods, to underscore its overall ambivalence in the 18th century British imagination, before tentatively concluding that “co-operation and negotiation between the two empires seemed viable options throughout the period in the mind of most Britons” (240). And although Kitson's case is persuasively argued from a wide-ranging evidential base, he is right to avoid summing too-definite a British opinion of China during this period. For, as we shall see, Macartney's reading of the Qing's level of scientific achievement relative to Britain's leads him to depict China in his travelogue, if not without exception, as backward, stubborn, and intellectually stagnant. A characterization that, by helping to undermine British confidence in the possibility of co-operation with the Chinese, seems to ominously anticipate the Opium Wars.

The great irony in Macartney's frequently unflattering depictions of the Chinese, of course, lies in the fact that they, with barely contained jealousy, belie China's great importance to the British as a trade partner. This importance is well illustrated by Macartney's ambitious list of official embassy objectives. Maxine Berg, analysing the Macartney embassy's cargo of gifts for the Qianlong Emperor, summarizes these:

> [F]irst, to reduce the constraints under which trade was carried on in Canton, and to open up other ports for trade nearer to the production districts of Britain’s key imports – silk and tea; second, to get exports from China on cheaper terms, and to have duties on imports and exports taken off or at least reduced; third to have English trade put on at least the same footing as that with Portugal; and fourth, to increase imports into China from Great Britain. (10)

Berg makes an important point, one that in fact applies to all three of the embassies under discussion: even by Nieuhof's time, Chinese goods were familiar to and well-loved by European consumers, and comprised several items that, in terms of quality at their price point, simply could not be obtained elsewhere. As early as the 17th century, with the introduction of the various East India companies, Berg explains:

5. e.g. Henrietta Harrison's “Chinese and British Diplomatic Gifts in the Macartney Embassy of 1793.”

> These goods – cottons, especially muslins and printed calicoes, silks, porcelain, ornamental brass and ironware, lacquer and paper goods, fans, objects in ivory and mother of pearl became highly desirable in Europe. These were special luxuries for Europeans – they were not the ancient or Persian luxuries of corruption and vice, the gold and rubies of the Indies. They were luxuries associated with a civilized way of life, appealing especially to the middling classes.
>
> The special feature that distinguished Asian manufacture was world class production of fine but affordable consumer ware, marked by diversity, taste and fashion, and produced and traded throughout Asia on a scale not previously encountered in Europe. These Asiatic goods boast all the qualities that European historians have previously argued were created first in world history in the eighteenth and nineteenth-century industrial revolutions in Britain and France. (4)

Centuries before industrial mass production revolutionized Europe, the Chinese had already established their prowess in both the production of a wide variety of superior consumer goods – what Berg calls “transformative luxuries” for their impact upon European tastes and accessibility to aspirational middle-class consumers – and in the global distribution of the same.[6] It will not be surprising, then, that Macartney's mission was from the outset intended as an act of technological espionage; even aside from its tea stores, China was envied for its manufacturing techne. And indeed, whether he won Britain any trade concessions or not, Royal Society president and grey-eminence-at-large Joseph Banks had made it clear that Macartney was not to come home from China empty-handed. In private correspondence to Lord Macartney in 1792, Banks directs him to bring back, for the sake of Mother Britannia, everything possible of Chinese methods of producing silk, porcelain, and tea.[7] Which is to say: give a man a silk, and he'll dress well for a night; teach a man to spin (specifically, with Chinese proficiency), and he'll dress a nation. In Joseph Banks' own words:

> [A] few practical men admitted among [the Chinese] would in a few years acquire a mass of information for which if placed in the industrious and active hands of English manufacturers the whole revenue of the Chinese empire would not be thought sufficient equivalent. (qtd in Berg, 13)

Without understanding how highly the obtention of Chinese manufacturing knowledge was

6. See also Jacqueline Van Gent's concise overview of this theme (305).
7. As discussed in: Berg (13); Drayton (92-93); Kitson (138); Hillemann (36-37).

prioritized by Macartney (and those, Banks in particular, who managed his embassy from afar), it cannot be possible to properly contextualise his mission, or travelogue, at all. And yet, this was only part of a larger pan-British impulse. Kitson, echoing Adas, puts it plainly: “British understandings of Chinese scientific and technological proficiency were vital to their overall estimation of the Qing empire” (126) – a dynamic epitomized by Macartney's travelogue.

Andreas Everard van Braam Houckgeest, like Nieuhof, did not lead the embassy whose journey he was tasked with recording, despite having conceived of the mission in the first place. The idea had come to him, the story goes, after hearing of Macartney's recent failure to curry favour with the Qing court. Sensing opportunity in Macartney's disgrace, Houckgeest suggested that a VOC embassy be sent to China under pretences of celebrating the 60th year of Qianlong's reign, a plan which Batavia's ever-expedient commissioners-general found agreeable (J. J. L. Duyvendak, 7-9). And though Houckgeest brought to the embassy considerable experience, having worked as a Supercargo in Canton on behalf of the VOC from 1758-1773, and as head of the Dutch factory in Canton since 1790, its controllers nevertheless appointed seasoned diplomat, scholar, and fellow VOC man Isaac Titsingh to head the 1794 mission. This was a bit ironic, since, as Ellen Xiangyu Cai (2011) observes, Titsingh was not himself fully in favour of the mission, grumbling that “other countries such as Spain, Portugal and France were not sending such embassies” (7). (“However,” she amusedly continues, “since the governor of Canton had already reported the intended dispatch of the Dutch embassy to the court, he had no choice but to carry it out” [7]). Houckgeest was instead designated “Second in the Embassy” (Houckgeest, vol. I, xi), and assigned the task of producing its formal account, which he famously embellished with illustrations by his own hand. Houckgeest wrote his journal in Dutch, and it was subsequently translated into French by M.L.E. Saint-Méry (an intriguing character in his own right, who I shall treat in greater depth in my chapter on Houckgeest) – which edition, after being pirated, made its way, eventually, in a fashion, into English. Like Nieuhof and Macartney before him, Houckgeest is consistently concerned with minute observation of China, its people, and their technologies. And like his predecessors, Houckgeest seems motivated by a desire to write the Chinese that strikes one as insistently concerned with his own objectivity, honesty, and the use of scientific principles to, as it were, translate China from an unknown to a known quantity.

In addition to these three primary diplomats, I shall also examine, in the supporting

role of ideological foil – most pointedly to his contemporary Nieuhof, but finally to the lot – some of the works of a fourth noted diplomat, Sir William Temple. Temple is of course renowned to this day as one of premodern Britain's great polymaths: a sterling prose stylist, who helped define the English essay form; a politician of several appointments, who famously negotiated the Triple Alliance of 1668, and arranged the marriage of William of Orange to Mary of England; a renowned garden designer; and, despite his never having travelled East himself, his nation's foremost scholar on China during his day.[8] As a consequence most obviously of this latter point, his inclusion in the current work finds justification by establishing between himself and Nieuhof a symmetry between 17th century British and Dutch Sinological sources that mirrors my pairing of Macartney and Houckgeest in the late 18th century. But moreover, and more importantly, Temple conceived very differently of the terms and usefulness of natural philosophy than did Nieuhof. The two, in fact, are nearly polar opposites on the topic, with Temple, in hindsight, representing a line of thought so sceptical of natural philosophy that it makes an ideal counterpoint to Nieuhof's budding scientism. Indeed, Temple is, in this regard, a veritable *Anti-hof*, whose ruminations on China and natural philosophy throw the contours of Nieuhof's thought, by contrast, into their greatest clarity – not only in themselves, but as early expressions of a Western ideological revolution whose legacy would lead to the travelogues of Macartney and Houckgeest.

Of course, the scrupulously detailed descriptions of China and the Chinese in the writings under study can and should be understood as, in part, a logical response to the Qing Empire's notoriously strict border control policies prior to the Opium Wars. Leonard Blussé (2013), referring specifically to the early Dutch-published travel literature that popularized the genre, captures the fundamental appeal of such works to European audiences: “What made [travelogues about China] so interesting is that they all were based on eyewitness accounts of the interior of the widely known but little explored empires of China and Japan by servants of the Dutch East India Company (VOC)” (14).[9] Any diplomatic mission to the economic heart of the Orient – whose lust for silver, by the mid-16th century, drove a global trade network that would go on to facilitate centuries of

8. See Blue, “China and Western social thought in the modern period” (64). Wybe Kuitert gives a good gloss of Temple's retirement from politics, and goes quite into depth on his Surrey estate, Moor Park (168).

9. See also Odell (142); Rubiés and Ollé (296); Nieuhof (158). Also, compare Houckgeest, who is shocked by the lack of circulation even *within* China: “[t]here are very few Chinese who have a general knowledge of the whole Empire, or who are acquainted with the customs of the provinces they do not inhabit,” (vol. II, 188).

European empire building[10] – that failed to return, among other things, reams of minute observation of the native lands and people – was inconceivable. It would have, in fact, been considered a scandalous waste; the waste of a rare opportunity to augment the limited first-hand knowledge available about one of the world's most antique and pre-eminent civilizations.[11]

And as Yue Zhuang and Andrea Riemenschnitter (2017) observe, premodern China was literally globally pre-eminent in nearly all cultural arenas:

> China in these centuries [circa 1500-1800] was widely viewed by contemporary European nations as a world power that was enjoying great stability and prosperity. When the Portuguese explorers reached India in 1498, China (Ming dynasty [1368-1644]) was already the centre of the long established African-Asian trading system. By standard criteria such as size, population, agriculture, commerce, wealth, sophistication, technology, military might, cuisine, learning, literature and the fine arts, the Ming dynasty presided over the greatest nation in the world. The Qing state (1644-1911)... was an unprecedented multi-ethnic and multicultural empire consisting of not only the heartland of China, but also eastern Turkestan, Mongolia and Tibet. With its successful consolidation policy, the Qing restored order and prosperity interrupted by the dynastic transition. In its heyday it achieved a level of material productivity far beyond that of any earlier Chinese dynasty. (3)

That China might so enchant the European reader during the premodern period, then, is not difficult to understand. However, prior to the mid-17th century, word of China's achievements had made their way to back Europe largely due to the literary efforts of the Jesuits, like Matteo Ricci, who had long dominated this arena of knowledge. But theirs were not unproblematic missives, because they were not unproblematic messengers. Their missionary ambitions predisposed them, it was suspected, to view both their potential converts and themselves through a lens brightly. A suspicion which, Ulrike Hillemann (2009) summarizes, led the Catholic-wary British to regard their works with growing distrust over the 18th century[12] – so helping to create a demand for more impartial information on China.

But even aside from wariness of missionary accounts, travel writing throughout the premodern era came increasingly to be seen as a valid mode of, as we would call it today, ethnographic study because of its empiricism. Adas writes:

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10. See especially Flynn and Giráldez; Markley (11); Deng (116-118); and Berg above.
11. Kitson gives an excellent discussion of this in chapter five of his monograph, which stresses the importance of traders and scientists to the accumulation of British knowledge of China (126).
12. Hilleman (16-17); see also, Adas (70); Blue (61). Houckgeest is quite explicit about how dependent the missionaries are on the favour of their Qing imperial “protectors,” (vol. I, 243).

> The influence of scientific thinking on the writers who shaped European attitudes towards non-Western cultures in the eighteenth century was manifested in a variety of ways. The accounts of overseas travelers took on an added importance as one form of the empirical evidence that eighteenth-century thinkers were convinced would enable them to undertake the 'scientific' study of human societies. (75)

But as Odell has explored in her “Clothing, Customs, and Mercantilism” (2002) the beginning of this trend towards scientifically inflected depictions of non-Western cultures can in fact be detected even earlier, in the “proto-ethnographic depictions of non-Europeans” characteristic of 17th century Dutch travel literature, such as Nieuhof's *An Embassy from the East India Company* (141-142). Given these factors – broad curiosity about a grand, powerful, and much-rumoured empire; growing scepticism towards missionary accounts of this empire; and the rise of “scientific” interest in non-Westerners generally – ethnographical observation had, by Macartney and Houckgeest's day in the late-18th century, become established as one of the most essential functions of any diplomatic envoy to China.

That said, observation even for ethnography's sake does not alone account for the ideological convergences in these travelogues, and their commentary, considered at face value, is only half the point. At least as far as concerns the present thesis, which does not attempt a comprehensive account of the European “idea of China” (as if such a monolith ever truly existed), but aims rather to examine the shared literary qualities of three landmark travelogues. Specifically, in order to highlight among these the development of a particular conceptual relationship that appears to undergird them all: that between scientism and imperialism. A relationship which emerging research suggests has been far more influential upon the overall tenor of Europe's relationship with China than has previously been acknowledged. Kitson, for instance, devotes a chapter in his monograph to the Macartney embassy and its role in the 18th century exchange of scientific ideas between Europe and China. Confirming the earlier work of Kapil Raj (2007), he argues that modern science as an institution never was a distinctly Western, or even Western-born phenomenon, but arose from “a complex historical process of [intercultural] collisions, negotiations, and compromises” (133). This process he illustrates with reference to the exchange of botanical knowledge and specimens procured by the Macartney embassy during their time in China.

Treating the same theme more exhaustively – and one of the best examples of

research on science and imperialism to date, directly anticipating my own – is Richard Drayton's *Nature's Government* (2005). Drayton's monograph explores the history of Britain's Kew gardens, finding it all of: a mascot for contemporary cultural values; a scientific hub of global importance; an influential player in the development and deployment of British agronomic policy; and a case study of the utility of scientists and scientific ideology generally as instruments of Western imperial power. Indeed, Drayton's portrayal of botany and empire as bedfellows is so grounded in historical detail that by his conclusion their partnership seems nearly foregone. But one thing which Kitson's and Drayton's shared emphasis on the concrete dimensions of their projects – the men, the places, the plants – leaves relatively neglected, is an in-depth account of the ideological affinities between scientific and imperialist thought, at the level *of* thought. At the level of text. A lacuna which this study's literary tack seeks to address.

Certainly then, Nieuhof, Macartney, and Houckgeest's texts can be considered historically significant at least as first-hand documents of European encounter with China during an era when such encounters were rare, and dependent upon Qing permission.[13] The relative paucity, within Europe, of intimate documentation of China made such accounts not only interesting to the public at large, but quite influential in contributing to the (albeit non-homogeneous) cluster of associations comprising the concept of China in the European cultural imaginary. As Zhuang and Riemenschnitter point out, “representations of other cultures are never simply descriptive, but involve locating the other cultures within the symbolic frameworks of the observing culture” (8). It is my contention that these travelogues present, over a century apart, three telling glimpses into the European psyche during a period of enormous intellectual tumult, into which context their distinct but not disconnected encounters with China must be placed.

I refer, of course, to the scientific revolution, which we may for our purposes consider as the ideological shift beginning with Copernicus' challenge to reigning Ecclesiastical mythos in *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium,* and snowballing thence to the works of Galileo, Bacon, Newton – a list still unfurling today. And a shift that, as Adas' monograph has made clear, would radically reshape not only how Europeans understood their relation to the natural world, but also, and consequently, to other peoples.

The Scientific Revolution, so-called

13. For instance, Henry Kent's discussion of Houckgeest (166).

It might go without saying that the scientific revolution was not a single watershed event, or even series of events, but rather a process. A process encompassing scattered epiphanies and breakthroughs over generations, whose interlinkages and cumulative contribution towards the establishment of what is today called the Western scientific tradition has often only been discernible in hindsight. But it will also be noted that even considered processionally, the scientific revolution did not develop uniformly across Europe. In her “Early Modern Intellectual Life: Humanism, Religion, and Science in Seventeenth Century England” (1991), Barbara Shapiro explains: “English science... focused to a far greater extent on empirical investigation and experiment and was more probabilistic and utilitarian than its continental counterparts” (46). The probabilistic, empirically-oriented nature of British science found ideological support, Shapiro argues, in a humanist tradition that, while largely unrelated, emphasized similar values. If indirectly, humanism thus helped to facilitate both the development and the intellectual legitimacy of Britain's scientific institutions over time. A more finely detailed comparison of continental and British science would be considerably outside my current remit, but recognizing the scientific revolution's indebtedness to various other ideologies (often regional) with which it was contemporary, is well in line with my project to identify the consonance between scientism and imperialism in the works of our roving Western diplomats. And without arguing for the equivalence of Dutch and British scientific traditions – or for that matter, imperial traditions – we can perhaps begin to piece together something of the Western European mindset, and indeed the extent to which such an object can be considered historically to exist at all, by examining the similarities in thought between the travelogues under study.[14] After all, the existence of regional and temporal variations in ideology certainly do not preclude the existence of inter-regional and -temporal similarities in the same; these too must be mapped.

Incidentally, it might be mentioned here that as, unsurprisingly, few farmhands had the opportunity or ability to read the latest scientific titles, it was the well-educated upper classes that first and most dramatically registered the scientific revolution's ideological effects (Adas, 9). Just the classes that Nieuhof, Macartney, and Houckgeest, in their diplomatic capacities, very literally represented, and for whom their texts may be

14. Regarding the historical entanglement of British and Dutch scientific traditions, see Lisa Jardine's *Going Dutch: How England Plundered Holland's Glory*. For a sustained comparison of British and Dutch imperialism, with especial regards to mercantile policies and differing approaches to colonisation, see P. O'Brien's “Mercantilism and Imperialism in the Rise and Decline of the Dutch and British Economies 1585-1815.”

considered to speak. And though their travelogues alone do not constitute anything near a complete fossil record of the evolution of scientism's influence upon European conceptualizations of China, they do represent three essential examples of that lineage.

One last introductory formality: at risk of redundancy, I shall point out that the puffy “Europes” and “Chinas” that I have and will go on from here to discuss, are not intended as proper anthropological categories, but as references to the ideas embedded in my primary texts. It is not the veracity of our ambassadors' observations, but the ideological premises that inform them that interests me – their lack of objectivity is precisely the point. And arguably, it'd have to be, for if, as Simon Schama points out in his landmark critique of Dutch Golden Age artefacts, even landscape paintings make poor photographs (10) – then what hope do we have of finding “unmediated naturalism” (10) in a travelogue? What one does find is more interesting than naturalism in any case. Because as we will see, Nieuhof, Macartney, and Houckgeest all mark an explicit distinction between European and Chinese peoples, and in each case this distinction is heavily predicated upon the perceived differences between Chinese and European science and techne.

Sceptres and Sextants: Relating Imperial Power and Scientism

> Enlightenment stands in the same relationship to things as the dictator to human beings. He knows them to the extent that he can manipulate them. The man of science knows things to the extent that he can make them. Their “in-itself ” becomes “for him.” In their transformation the essence of things is revealed as always the same, a substrate of domination. This identity constitutes the unity of nature. (Adorno and Horkheimer, Dialectic of Enlightenment, 6)

One of the first and still most thorough theorisations of scientific ideology as such was Theodor Adorno and Max Horkeimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, first published in 1944. In this defining expression of Frankfurt School criticism, Adorno and Horkheimer argue that the science of the Enlightenment – which continues to loom over the modern era, both in its own right and through the industrialism and subsequent consumerism which it enabled – is essentially “mythological.” And mythologies, they explain, are never merely schematic, but strategies of domination rooted, like all forms of power, in apprehension, categorization, superordination: the establishment of hierarchies. Reducing the universe to a set of “calculable” (4) laws exercised over a single dispersed substance, scientific ideology promises man the power that comes from *knowing.* Anything known,

after all, can be anticipated – and therefore manipulated. And therefore controlled. Thus does a conceptual hierarchy become concrete. They make this latter point explicitly: “In thought, human beings distance themselves from nature in order to arrange it in such a way that it can be mastered” (31). Science was not after all about knowledge for its own sake, but for the sake of the will-to-power. Like magic and religion before it, the “science” that arose from the Enlightenment was a method by which man could rule all things – including his own tribe. “What human beings seek to learn from nature is how to use it to dominate wholly both it and human beings. Nothing else counts” (2).

Definitions: semantic and thematic scientism

Moving forward (and for that matter backward), I shall use the word “scientism,” in the general sense, to refer to this “mythological” function of science as a strategy of domination, whether of human or nonhuman subjects – that is, science as ideology. I shall also use it to refer to that valorisation of science as an institution – e.g. its presumed objectivity, its presumed nobility of intent – that obscures its ideological qualities. And while I recognize that Adorno and Horkheimer themselves would probably not bother to distinguish between what I am calling scientism and scientific ideology generally, I find that doing so allows for an easier discussion of those textual habits I am interested in analysing: it is much easier to speak of “semantic scientism” than “the semantics of scientific ideology.”

This, of course, begs the question: what exactly *are* the textual habits I am interested in analysing? I have described, by way of Adorno and Horkheimer, what I believe scientism at its most fundamental to be; but how can we discern it, an ideology, in text? What are its signatures? Firstly, I will be looking for the language of scientism, or what I have described above as *semantic scientism*: habits of description that derive from the scientific method, and imply its authority and truthfulness. For example, common to all of Nieuhof, Macartney, and Houckgeest, is a tendency to the production of taxonomical lists: classificatory inventories of phenomena, such as a landscape's natural resources, that serve to conceptualize it in exacting terms. We will find quantification extremely common in all three works as well: the translation of objects and phenomena into measurable, universal units. And finally, mimicking science's aim at empirically deriving transcendent principles, we will also be very interested in the extrapolation of universal patterns from specific instances – as when, for instance, our writers comment on an

essentialised Chinese character or constitution. This kind of language presents its object as nothing so much as a scientific specimen, conceptually delimited and contained by a Western epistemological system that has already been presumed fully capable of understanding and judging its worth; a fundamentally Eurocentric position. My analysis of semantic scientism, then, will centre on the way scientistic language is applied to either Chinese people and culture, or material China itself (including its nonhuman milieu), and how those applications might serve imperialist aims by supporting or smokescreening imperialism's Eurocentric conceits.

Stylistic habits aside, I will also of course be concerned with what I have called *thematic scientism*, which encompasses any *explicit* assessments of Chinese science or technology – for example, comparisons between European and Chinese techne, or commentary on the state of Chinese scientific learning generally – which we shall also find in abundance throughout the travelogues. This category is most distinct from semantic scientism in that it is more straightforward; it is not stylistic, but topical. But ultimately, both thematic and semantic scientism are expressions of the same underlying ideological ground, and differentiating strictly between them rather than exploring them as expressions of that ground will not generally be my goal. However, I do differentiate between them here to point out that as of this writing, I am not aware of any previous inquiries into scientism's semantic aspects.

Britain's cinchona scheme: a case study

My emphasis of scientism as a strategy of dominance is not meant to imply that scientism alone is somehow responsible for imperialism. But it certainly could, and did, reinforce it. And to best illustrate the symbiosis between these similarly totalising ideologies at the conceptual level, it seems appropriate, with Adorno and Horkheimer still fresh in mind, to consider a historical example of Drayton's that, while unrelated to the following travelogues directly, nevertheless illustrates the scientism-imperialism relationship in action at the broad, institutional level of operation at which it has hitherto been studied. Drayton relates how France and Britain in the 18th and 19th centuries increasingly utilized men of science as imperial agents, whose discoveries of spices and medicines unknown to the West were used to justify imperial acquisition of the lands in which these new latent commodities grew. Indeed, “the natural scientist, as he named the natural riches of new territories, and mapped the uses of the world's things, was allied with

[the imperialist's] moral project.... to reorder the uses of resources and labour" with regards to an efficiency and "best use of nature" that it was science's ongoing project to discern and help direct (Drayton, 232).

The cynical tale of Britain's cinchona scheme illustrates this dynamic with nauseating clarity. British foray into the mass cultivation of cinchona trees, whose bark yields quinine, potent febrifuge and treatment for malaria, began with high economic hopes in 1860. In that year, Kew Gardens received a grant from the royal treasury to develop shelters for the nursing of seedlings that were intended later to be transferred to Indian commercial plantations (Drayton, 209). By the 1890's, however, these hopes had (if you'll pardon the pun) all but withered: the kind of cinchona the British had managed to propagate simply could not compete with the quality of the Dutch cinchona that dominated the market, and never turned a profit. But British cinchona was not devoid medicinal value, and in 1876, George King, Superintendent of the Calcutta Botanic Garden, oversaw a successful initiative to dispense it via post widely and cheaply to the Indian populace (each packet cost only 5 pice – one English farthing) (231).[15] Subsequently, the history of British cinchona cultivation was pointedly revised, and, happy luck, new, altruistic motives were discerned in the clarity of hindsight to have underlain the project all along. So declared noted civil servant Clement Markham, who was instrumental in obtaining the cinchona for the British in the first place (231). Commercial failure, refigured, became public health success; not merely *an* act of noblesse oblige by the enlightened British towards their Indian subjects, but a defining one: exemplary of the kind of progressive end that validated imperial means (231).

By countless historical examples like the one above, Drayton charts how empire in the West variously deployed scientific methodology and ideology in the roughly premodern period in pursuit of its economic and colonial goals – giving form, time and again, to Adorno and Horkheimer's thesis in the process. By identifying potential commodities, potential markets, and potential extra-economic justifications for colonial expansion, Britain's scientists had by the late 19th century become invaluable agents of empire. This much is incontestable, as Drayton's analysis makes clear. But there is a more granular level at which the interrelation of scientistic and imperialistic thought can be observed, and it is that to which I shall turn in my close readings of Nieuhof, Macartney, and Houckgeest.

15. Nonetheless, Drayton writes that "The truth, unfortunately, was that even that crude and diluted source of quinine was, at 5 pice, too dear for most Indians to use regularly" (231).

But is it actually scientism?

Perhaps the most obvious complaint that could be made against my methodology is that, after all, a number is a number is a number – and perhaps nothing else. The *Book of Exodus* too is obsessed with measurements. Who hasn't been astounded by the speed with which the word “cubit” can, through repetition, flatten into complete atonal meaninglessness, even in the course of a single page? Does this mean that the Old Testament writers too were incipient scientists? But perhaps they were. The ideological and historical convergences between scientism, which developed in a European and therefore Christian context, and various other historically influential ideologies that preceded it, has, and for good reason, attracted much scholarly attention. Joseph Needham, outlining the inputs Christianity made to the development of Western science, explains in *The Grand Titration* (1969):

> Without doubt one of the oldest notions in Western civilization was that just as earthly imperial law-givers enacted codes of positive law to be obeyed by men, so also the celestial and supreme rational Creator Deity had laid down a series of laws which must be obeyed by minerals, crystals, plants, animals and the stars in their courses. There can be little doubt that this idea was intimately bound up with the development of modern science at the Renaissance in the West. (The Grand Titration, 35-36)

Needham, rather after his fashion, is painting in quite broad strokes here, and in service of his goal to differentiate European and Chinese views of nature – but his picture is not inaccurate insofar as it goes. We will consider his research more closely in the next section of my introduction, but his argument makes a useful overview of the historical interrelation of science and Christianity in the West. This interrelation is also the focus of Eric Jorink's work on Golden Age Dutch conceptions of nature as the second Book of Creation. In his monograph *Reading the Book of Nature in the Dutch Golden Age* (2010), Jorink explains how the study of natural philosophy in many 16-18th century religious circles amounted to a glorification of God's work, complementing even of necessity the study of the Bible itself. Jorink's research illustrates that modern dichotomizations of science and religion would hardly have been conceivable prior to the 18th century; a point worth mentioning in the context of the current thesis as an example of science's historical imbrication within a larger matrix of ideologies that structured Western thought in the premodern era.

But that is the extent of my speculation about Biblical authors; for it seems unlikely, in the end, that the motivation behind *Exodus*' obsessive quantifications of Tabernacle building materials is fully identical to, say, Macartney's motivations many centuries later in quantifying Chinese agricultural technologies – that, in other words, all instances of quantification are casually interchangeable. How then can we know that such habits in our ambassadors are in fact expressions of scientism, and not something else? Without discounting the extent to which ideologies aside from scientism must have influenced all of our diplomats, as we will presently see, Nieuhof, Macartney, and Houckgeest all invoke Science-with-a-big-S – Science the institution – as a justification for their missions overall.[16] And each, in fact, stresses this point in no uncertain terms, name-checking science more than once as a primary motivation for their embassies generally, and their travelogues more specifically. It is a premise of this thesis that they should be taken at their words.

Premodern techne, East and West

A properly contextualised critique of our diplomats' views of Chinese techne requires, to begin with, some familiarity with Europe and China's comparative premodern levels of technological development – it will be impossible, after all, to unpack the implications of their assessments without having some grounds for determining the accuracy, if any, of these assessments. But as it turns out, making such a comparison is no straightforward task. Given the size and diversity of these regions, any number of qualifications immediately arise. Which areas of Europe are to be included in the comparison? Which areas of China? Which kinds of technology? It would take several monographs to address this topic in any depth; but luckily, much incisive scholarship on the topic has been done already, from which a useful overview can be drawn.

Joseph Needham

And luckily, this scholarship has much progressed beyond the paradigm established by Joseph Needham in *The Grand Titration: Science and Society in East and West*, wherein he (in)famously asked: “Why... did modern science, as opposed to ancient and medieval science (with all that modern science implied in terms of political dominance),

16. Granted that Nieuhof does so in the vernacular of his day.

develop only in the Western world?" (ii). Needham usefully defines "modern science" as "the application of mathematical hypotheses to Nature, the full understanding and use of the experimental method, the distinction between primary and secondary qualities, the geometrisation of space, and the acceptance of the mechanical model of reality" (15) – all qualities that indeed have come to be thought of as inextricable to the Western scientific tradition, and many of which will surface in our chosen travelogues. But Needham's dichotomization of European and Chinese mindsets is sometimes suspiciously reductive. The major difference he finds between the two is a Chinese tendency towards "organicism" – "in which every phenomenon was connected with every other according to hierarchal order" (21) – a holistic way of thinking that prevented the development of a Western-style, "mechanical view" of the world, and subsequently, the development of Western-style scientific theories. I find Needham's use of the word "hierarchal" mysterious here, as what Needham describes is no Christian great chain of being, but a "harmonious co-operation of all beings," each being a "whole" incorporated within a larger "cosmic and organic pattern" (36). No transcendent laws prevail here, but each being, each whole, obeys only "the internal dictates of their own nature" (36). This sounds like no hierarchy I am familiar with; it sounds, in fact, like a romantic definition of anarchy. But regardless, Needham's characterization here, though appealingly clear-cut, seems in the last instance wishfully clear-cut, and like most grand theories, its totalising view of its subject tends to wash out much in the way of nuance.

And not only in regards to China. Robert Finlay, in his thorough critique of the strengths and weaknesses of Needham's *Science and Civilisation in China,* the precursor to *The Grand Titration,* has scathingly observed: "[Needham's] depiction of European history amounts to little more than a mechanical application of Marxist clichés that were outdated before the first volume of *Science and Civilisation* appeared." Finlay has plenty to say about Needham's depiction of Chinese history as well, remarking that Needham:

> [D]evoted his life to revealing the stunning accomplishments of China, its steady, uninterrupted progress in science and technology through the centuries; but... his account ignores social, political, and economic contexts. The reader of *Science and Civilisation* has little sense of the circumstances of the achievements being described; they appear to take place in an airless environment, isolated and impassive. (300)

Needham's analyses of Chinese technological breakthroughs suffer from their lack of social context; decontextualised, Needham is able to string them together according to a

story of his own making.

Another, and I think more persuasive, basis that Needham gives for the differing paths of Chinese and European scientific and technological development lies in Chinese imperial bureaucracy; specifically, its patronage of or failure to patronize different fields.[17] He gives, for instance, astronomy and hydraulics engineering as two examples of "orthodox sciences" that were developed by the state; the former as essential to plotting the seasonal rhythms that must necessarily organize agrarian society, and the latter as derived from the typically Chinese concern for water management (e.g. irrigation, flood control, conservation). And indeed we shall later find, in our reading of Macartney, a similar observation (if differently intoned) made of the dependence of Chinese science upon state sponsorship. Half a century after *The Grand Titration's* publication, and despite significant changes in the field of Sino-European historiography, much of Needham's thought remains compelling. He is undoubtedly an innovative theorist, and his familiarity with both Eastern and Western scientific history remains impressive. But in hindsight, his project rather suffers from a prioritization of Western thought models that, in direct contradiction to his cautions otherwise, seems to interpret "modern Western science" teleologically.

This is, after all, the implication of the work's very premise. As he puts it:

> We dare not trespass here upon the great debate concerning subjectivity in formulations of scientific law, but the question does arise whether the recognition of statistical regularities and their mathematical expression could have been reached by any other road than that which Western science actually travelled. (37)

Needham's metaphor figures "statistical regularities and their mathematical expression" as the proper final destination of scientific inquiry; in context, his passage suggests relief that Western science has taken the road it has. But further, and further to the goals of this thesis, I find it impossible *not* to trespass upon that "great debate" he mentions with such trepidation; it is exactly science's pretensions to noble objectivity that make it such an effective cover for imperial goings-on, and that have made scientists so invaluable to Western empire. Overall, Needham's work strikes me as an albeit well-intentioned example of what Ming Dong Gu (2013) has called "sinologism": that "ideological dominance of Western intellectual habits vis-à vis China" that arises from the Western intellectual project to "incorporate China into the Western-centered global world system"

17. See especially his discussion of imperial workshops (24-25), and more general treatment of imperial patronage of the sciences (30-32).

(2). Sinologism, that is, is the attempt by Western epistemologists to account for Chinese cultural achievements (and presumed failures to achieve) by explaining them within a narrative that presupposes the dominance of Western epistemology. And that is exactly what Needham, despite himself, seems to do.[18]

Roger Hart

And with all due respect to Needham, his deficiencies make an excellent segue to Roger Hart, who takes them as inspiration for his “Beyond Science and Civilization: A Post-Needham Critique” (1999). In it, Hart takes the ideological framework that he finds to underlie Western approaches to Chinese scientific history as his subject. He is especially interested in how even Needham's fiercest detractors so often end up collapsing back into the very conceptual West/China divide that they had meant to discredit. He notes the long history of such dichotomization in Western thought:

> For some writers fundamental differences were linguistic: alphabetic versus ideographic scripts, the existence versus non existence of the copula, scientific versus poetic, theoretic versus practical, or abstract versus concrete; these traits were then linked to the development of rigorous scientific language or efficient bureaucracies (Goody 1986; Gernet 1985). In some accounts, the fundamental difference was capitalism, which itself ushered in modernity. In yet other accounts the key was religion: Max Weber improbably connected the differences he alleged to have discovered between Protestantism and Chinese religions to capitalism (Weber [1922] 195 1). For others, the fundamental differences were philosophic: conceptions of natural law, causal versus correlative thinking, the ordering of time and space, demonstrative logic versus consensus (e.g., Needham 1951; Bodde 1959; Bodde 1979); China, one translator of Chinese philosophy proclaimed, lacked philosophy altogether (Dubs 1929). For others, the fundamental difference was political – democracy versus Oriental despotism (Wittfogel 1957). This list represents but a fraction of claims for the key features distinguishing the West from the Rest; the search continues to this day (Huntington 1996). (91; I have left Hart's citations intact to demonstrate his scope.)

Hart's overall complaint is that the term *science* itself is in fact impossible to define in the transhistorical, transcultural way that Needhamian comparative analyses prerequire if they are to “avoid the charge of simply circularly invoking the particular sciences in one or several localities (e.g., ancient Greece, early modern Europe) as [science's] essential

18. Although, interestingly, I must note that Gu does not seem to share this opinion, mentioning Needham approvingly as a harsh critic of Wittfogel's assertion that Chinese government was essentially despotic (8).

defining forms” (92). Hart points out that Needham attempts to circumvent the issue of posing “a radical difference between civilizations East and West” not by erasing the divide between them, but by temporalizing it. “Needham insisted on preserving the uniqueness of modern Western science by claiming the premodern world – including China and Greece – 'must be thought of as a whole'; the radical break for Needham was the boundary between the modern and the primitive” (97-98). And yet, such a moving of goal posts ultimately not only preserves the West/China divide, but does so in a way that continues to valorise Western over Chinese contributions to the history of science.

From Needham, Hart winds his way through the arguments and issues Needham's research spurred, as these have rippled down through intellectual history. One conclusion he comes to that I find particularly relevant to this thesis is that modern, postcolonially inflected discussions of Western science have “too often been tempted to critique the West in its entirety by equating it with science portrayed now not as universal and liberating but instead as hegemonic, normalizing, and disciplinary” (107). Hart's caution against essentialising “the West” on the basis of a presumedly homogeneous scientific culture (or monolithic culture of any kind) is well taken. But I question his implicit objection to the notion that science has, especially in colonial settings, in fact *not* been hegemonic, normalizing, and disciplinary; and this not despite, but because it has for so long been idealized as universal and liberating. Perhaps we could distinguish here between the scientific method strictly speaking, and that numinous cluster of golden associations (such as the privileged access to universal and liberating truths) that has grown up around it, and consequently made scientific men, institutions, and – yes – rhetoric so vital historically as instruments of imperial power. And in fact Hart's own suggestions for future research seem to trend in the direction of this distinction. He theorises:

> A... direction for research [that] begins by recognizing the enormous historical efficacy of imagined communities and the claims made about science and civilizations, studying them as the ideologies of the historical protagonists and thus the object of analysis rather than as explanatory categories in which history itself is to be framed. (109)

By identifying the ways that science has been invoked as a rhetorical tool to reinforce imperialist ideologies and further imperialist goals – and how scientism in its own right as an ideology of control so well aligns with imperialism's most fundamental attitudes – this thesis seems to answer Hart's call that “claims made about science and civilizations” be

considered in terms of their usefulness to “historical protagonists,” rather than as self-evident truths.

Kenneth Pomeranz

Kenneth Pomeranz' *The Great Divergence* (2000), which compares Britain and the Chinese Yangzi-region on several fronts, is indispensable in opening out Needham's topic to include the impact of colonialism upon Western science and technology. Pomeranz contends that “European science, technology, and philosophical inclinations alone do not seem an adequate explanation” (68) for Britain's origination of the Industrial Revolution. Rather, the reason that Britain, and not China (or for that matter Eastern Europe or Japan) was the site of the industrial revolution, was largely owing to a series of happy accidents. In particular, being dealt a good hand in terms of both native resources, such as coal, and later, colonial resources, such as extensive lumber and cropland. Both of these resource sites, Pomeranz explains, must be taken into careful consideration. After all, the premodern Chinese too had knowledge of coal, sizeable deposits of the stuff (particularly in northern provinces like Shanxi), and were quite sophisticated in myriad other areas of resource extraction, refinement, and utilization. That they therefore could have developed coal power on a scale comparable to Industrial Britain is not implausible. British deposits, however, were geologically situated so as to be more accessible; and significantly, the premodern British were more at leisure to develop them because their colonial land holdings obviated the need to divert labour and energy into techne aimed at squeezing ever greater yields – of food, fiber, lumber – from limited tracts of native cropland (Pomeranz 63-68).

As another example of the extent to which Britain's industrialization was contingent upon colonial resources, Pomeranz notes that “had the New World not provided enormous amounts of textile fibers, European precocity in mechanizing spinning and weaving might seem more like interesting curiosities” (46) today than important technological breakthroughs. He summarizes the situation this way:

> Without both coal and colonies, neither one would have been nearly as significant; and without the relaxation of resource constraints they allowed, other European innovations alone would not have created a new world where having finite land did not prevent indefinitely sustained per capita growth. (68)

For current purposes, what is most important about Pomeranz' work is its sustained refutation of the notion that China was either demonstrably technologically inferior to Europe prior to the late 18th century, or that, when it did relinquish its status as one of the world's most technologically advanced cultures, this was because of some inherent flaw in the Chinese character. The idea that the Qing dynasty was a time of scientific and technological stagnation deserves reconsideration; evidentially ill-supported, it implies a troubling retrojection of teleological plot lines upon the past. A point which Pomeranz confronts directly:

> Histories of technology often imagine one breakthrough creating a 'bottleneck' that concentrates efforts on a specific problem and so leads to another breakthrough, as when advances in weaving created incentives to speed up spinning. But such bottlenecks are just as often addressed by allocating more resources, without any change in technique, and the longer that process of reallocation of resources continues, the less incentive remains to find a technological solution. (55)

In other words, technological innovation is not a given where intensification of manufacture (i.e. the increased application of existing modes of manufacture) is an option. In fact, Pomeranz observes, the opposite was more often the case in both China *and* Europe prior to the Industrial Revolution. Ultimately, as Robert Markley (2006) has glossed of Pomeranz' research, Pomeranz amply demonstrates that in terms of diet, life expectancy, freeness of local labour markets, wage differentials between men and women, and even how closely their economies align with Adam Smith's definition of a neoclassical economy – by any of these measures, China either equals or soundly trumps Europe until the late 1700s (Markley, 12). “[T]he very criteria that have been used to champion English exceptionalism actually show that in many ways the heavily populated coastal provinces of China equaled or surpassed the 'advanced' economies of Northwestern Europe” (Markley, 12).

Robert Markley

But Markley himself has more to contribute to the history of Sino-European relations than summaries of other scholars' work. Taking Pomeranz' argument for the sophistication of Chinese manufacturing technologies as a cornerstone for his own critique of Eurocentricity, Markley, in *The Far East and the English Imagination, 1600-1730* (2006),

explores how a far-ranging assortment of premodern literature set the stage for modern Eurocentric readings of Sino-European history. One of the central pillars of Markley's project is to undermine the notion that the Chinese, specifically the Qing, were culturally or scientifically stagnant, and that therefore their subjection to the British after the Opium Wars was ineluctable. “Not only is the senescence of the late Qing dynasty used to justify these views of China's failure” Markley explains, “but the very analytical vocabularies of a progressivist historiography reinforce an overall narrative of western Europe's economic dominance in the early modern period” (Markley, 6). More explicitly than Pomeranz, Markley is concerned with the ways in which modern academic tropes – e.g. “the senescence of the late Qing dynasty” – encourage Eurocentric readings of history. Arriving at the same conclusion as Pomeranz by way of a very different set of data, Markley points out that:

> Europe enjoyed no decisive technological advantages over Japan or China before 1800 – a fact noted by almost all European merchants and missionaries who visited these countries in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and marveled at the variety, quality, and low price of Chinese and Japanese goods. (Markley, 13)

By examining the words of Sinophiles, Sinologists, as well as various authors – such as John Milton and Daniel Defoe, whose feelings towards China were more ambiguous, and knowledge of it more dubious – Markley is able to foreground the extent to which the East figures in English literary discourse as an astoundingly malleable signifier. As a presence in premodern English literature, China is sometimes an idealized scholastic nation-state; sometimes a foil for English protestant morality; and often, on account of its vastness and wealth, an object of intertwined mercantilist greed and fear. Unveiling England's conceptual China as in fact several Chinas, each tinged by the anxieties of the day, Markley's work points towards my own interest in scientism's affect upon European conceptions of that great and shadowy empire looming in the East.

Gregory Blue

Like Markley's monograph, Gregory Blue's “China and Western social thought in the modern period” (1999) has emphasized the extent to which Western discourse about

China has itself a history which begs socio-historical contextualization.[19] But whereas Markley takes fluctuating academic trends in the study of Sino-European relations as the starting point for his work, Blue approaches a related topic – in his words, "Western intellectual culture," which, if not identical to academe, at least subsumes it – as the focus of his research. "The different phases in the development of [Western] ideas about China," Blue argues, "were linked to broader trends in ideology, political goals, and capitalist economic priorities" (57) in ways which were not always immediately clear. Of the premodern period specifically, he writes:

> [F]rom 1600 to 1750, the invocation of China by European writers often involved a belief that Chinese history and civilization, like those of ancient Egypt, might hold certain lessons that could be appreciated and applied for the enhancement of Western culture. In the period from about 1750 until the years between the two world wars, another consensus was increasingly consolidated based on an assumption among social thinkers that Western civilization (as this was variously construed) dated back to ancient Greece and that this alone could be considered as "universally" valid. (Blue, 71)

Two things stand out about Blue's assertion. The first is his acknowledgement that Westerners' understandings of their relation to China have historically been plastic, and beholden to various political influences; the second, that many Western thinkers prior to the mid-18th century admitted the relative comparability of European and Chinese cultures overall – but that where they did identify greater sophistication on one side, often assigned it to the Chinese. They did not, of course, always do this without reservation, and some resisted it altogether. Blue says of Francis Bacon that "Bacon would seem to have known that many of the most important discoveries and inventions that he thought made modern Europe more learned than antiquity had originated in China," but that he nevertheless characterised China as a "'curious, ignorant, fearful, foolish nation'" (60). If nothing else, this insight indicates both the extent to which Europe understood its indebtedness to Chinese cultural and technological innovations, and also the anxiety this debt aroused. Blue's aim here, and throughout his chapter, is to identify the various ideological influences that have borne upon the conceptions of China adhered to by Western intellectuals (in Bacon's case, "the mercantile aspirations" [60] of his native country); a point also made, in their own ways, by both Pomeranz and Markley. And as Blue himself states flatly at one

19 For a more general discussion of how China has historically been viewed through a Capitalistic lens, see also Blue and Timothy Brook's introduction to *China and Historical Capitalism: Genealogies of Sinological Knowledge,* from which book the named essay is taken.

point, rather anticipating my own interests:

> In the long run, the great expansion of Western European productive and scientific forces in the Industrial Revolution provided strong reinforcement to ideas of European superiority. The comparative speed of European progress in the eighteenth century was so remarkable that it led one writer to exclaim quite accurately: “The peoples of the Orient were formerly quite superior to our Western peoples, in all the arts of the mind and of the hand. But how we have made up for lost time!” ...It was perhaps hardly surprising that China, a country not yet subordinated to colonial domination, became the object of heavy ideological onslaught as India was being brought under Western control politically and militarily. (73)

Thus can we add Blue, too, to the scholarly chorus stressing the importance of perceived scientific achievement to European self-regard in the long 18th century.

Francesca Bray

Francesca Bray's “Towards a critical history of non-Western technology” (1999) offers a valuable analysis of Chinese technological history that foregrounds the viewpoint of the Chinese themselves. Challenging Eurocentric historiographies by attempting to recover the significance these technologies had to their native culture and era – sans any tinting by modern, capitalist colours – Bray seeks to reconstitute what she calls “the local meanings of technological systems” (166). Her central claim is that “[a]rguing back from the telos of Western modernity straitjackets our understanding of what technology is and what roles it serves in different societies,” because such arguments lead to both Eurocentricity and a valorisation of capitalist economic standards. Consequently, “it becomes difficult to imagine alternative trajectories of technical development, trajectories that might have emphasized other criteria than engineering sophistication, scale economies, or increased output” (163). For while roughly premodern Chinese agri- and sericulture were not fields characterised by large leaps in technological innovation, “significant changes occurred in the volume of output and organization of production” (167) in these fields during the Ming and Qing dynasties – a situation whose logic requires a rethinking of technology's cultural importance beyond merely capitalistic terms.

To do just this, Bray draws from Lewis Mumford's postulation that technologies produce, besides items, and perhaps even more importantly, social identities. Bray asserts that Chinese agri- and sericultural techne was understood within Chinese culture as

essential to the production of, above all else, morally upright women and men; specifically by way of the concept of *nangeng nuzhi,* or “men till, women weave” (169). As a representative example of this dynamic, Bray explains of the relation between womanhood and sericulture:

> Learning textile skills inculcated the fundamental female values of diligence, frugality, order, and self-discipline that characterised good wives and mothers. In early China little girls of gentle birth were taught to spin and weave from the age of eight or nine, when their brothers started learning to read and to carry arms. (196)

Agriculture and sericulture were considered not only to produce vital material outputs, but also to be literally essential to the production of gender, in part by maintaining an idealized, traditional complementarity between husbands and wives. A complementarity that it was the special responsibility of imperial policymakers to uphold, as marriages were seen as the foundation of an orderly society (195).

The various, generally Confucian-inflected power dynamics – as between genders; between the ruling elite and the masses – that Bray discusses are too nuanced to do full justice here without straying from my interest in comparing Chinese and Western techne. But it is nonetheless worth noting a few key points about her analysis. Firstly, Bray makes clear that Chinese agri- and sericultural technologies, far from being stagnant during the Ming and Qing eras, were in fact merely yoked to a non-European set of ideologies, one deeply concerned with the role of technology in maintaining gender roles considered fundamental to society's well being. Secondly, Bray's work deftly illustrates, not despite but because of the specificity of her analysis, how inextricable a culture's techne is from the contemporary ideologies that give it its value and guide its development. By portraying Chinese techne as adapted to the prevailing concerns of its culture, Bray is able to provide a native rationale for a period of Chinese technological development that cannot be accounted for by Eurocentric, capitalist historiographies of technology. Moreover, Bray's research underscores the importance of non-scientific ideology per se as an impetus for technological development, by giving a specific example of this dynamic. For while this thesis examines the influences of scientism upon European conceptions of China, it is premised upon the idea, which Bray clearly delineates, that technologies both native and foreign are never experienced or valued except through inherited ideological frameworks.

Michael Adas

And finally, we come to Michael Adas' *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (1998), which takes as its theme the profound effects of scientific ideology upon European attitudes towards non-Europeans. Adas' research, which covers the 16th through 19th centuries, surveys a variety of nonfictional and fictional texts as evidence of the growing importance of scientific and technological achievement to European notions of civilization during this period. As achievement in these areas became increasingly central to Western Europe's sense of self, the perceived primitive or degenerate states of the same in Africa, India, and China, became increasingly a basis for white supremacism, derogation of non-European cultures generally – and, unsurprisingly, the retroactive minimization of the roles of non-Europeans in Europe's own scientific and technological evolution (15; 193). Adas summarizes the development of this ethnocentric narrative:

> [Pre-industrial] European travellers, even educated ones, shared with peoples overseas a sense of the helplessness of humans in the face of nature's awesome power. This attitude contrasts sharply with the Europeans' belief, embraced centuries later when the process of industrialization was under way, that the degree to which a society has mastered its environment reflects the extent to which it has ascended from savagery to civilization. (24)

Incidentally, this assertion is especially fascinating in light of Pomeranz' aforementioned work on the comparability of Western European and Chinese technologies for most of the premodern era, as it suggests that the West's ideological obsession with mastering the natural world, not only by studying it, but in practice by turning it efficiently to human ends, might well be considered a historical prerequisite to industrialization. That perhaps scientism, understood in the Adornan sense as the predominant and domination-focused mythos of the Enlightenment, was the ideological reagent that alchemized Britain's superior hand of natural resources into a technological revolution. I will be careful to note, however, that this speculation is not one of Adas' own claims.

As Adas himself explains his thesis, the empirical basis of Western science and technology was taken as proof “that European modes of thought and social organization corresponded much more closely to the underlying realities of the universe than did those of any other people or society” (6) – a conviction whose affect upon world history would be dramatic. Drawing from commentary encompassing both leading philosophes like

Leibniz and Voltaire, and the myriad travel journals of lesser-known but contemporarily influential figures like Captain George Anson, Adas scrupulously builds his case for the assertion that “[t]he European colonizers' sense of their pre-eminence in inventiveness and organization and their vastly superior understanding of the workings of nature, not merely the conqueror's prerogative, justified their monopolization of leadership and managerial roles in colonized societies” (205). So much hangs in a dependent clause: before the spread of European imperialism, empires had existed, but until the premodern era, imperial domination of colonized subalterns was justified by recourse to either naked “conqueror's prerogative,” or, more commonly, a Christianized version of this (Adas, 6-7). With the rise of science in the 18th century, however, the European's unique insights into the underlying “workings of nature,” as much as or even moreso than his good Christian faith, attested his racial superiority, and therefore his position at the top of the colonial hierarchy. (Although this is certainly not to say that Christian justifications for the workings of empire were ever abandoned; they were simply joined by yet another proof of European superiority). And indeed, Adas explains that during the 19th century, the conflation of Western scientific mastery and moral prerogative became an imperialist trope, with imperial apologists arguing that “without Western science and technology there was no hope of improving the condition of the impoverished masses of China and India or of civilizing the 'savages' of Africa” (204). We have in fact met this trope already, in Drayton's anecdote about the *a posteriori* justifications given by the British state in unloading backlogged cheap cinchona on its Indian subjects.

Adas' monograph, like Drayton's, has provided essential groundwork for this thesis, and I am particularly indebted to his regular turns towards China. But moreover, moving forward I would also borrow his caution that, when speaking of “'European views and responses,” we are “referring collectively to the ideas and arguments of those members of the 'articulate classes' of western Europe who concerned themselves with issues relating to European involvement overseas,” (9). It is too easy, in discussions of intercultural phenomena – as Hart, too, has persuasively argued – to reify vast regions into homogeneous, beige, ahistorical hiveminds. The great appeal of Adas' work is his canvass of the various lettered Western Europeans who were involved in international affairs between the 16th and 19th centuries; a breadth of survey that justifies, and even calls for, the minuteness of the current study.

Robert Drayton

Before making summaries, it will also be worth revisiting here two scholars I have discussed previously, Richard Drayton and Peter J. Kitson, as both of these theorists' works too underscore the motif that I have attempted to trace throughout this chapter: that, as China and Europe were developmentally comparable in almost every measurable respect during the premodern era, therefore subsequent conceptions of China as scientifically or technologically (or otherwise) stagnant during this time must be scrutinized for bias. Indeed, every scholar examined so far has arrived at some version of the claim that Eurocentricity lies at the heart of this narrative. Drayton's especial contribution on this front, in *Nature's Government*, is to illustrate the anxious ambivalence of late 18th century British attitudes towards Chinese science and technology. For, despite Britain's pose of clear technological superiority at this point, in fact the desire to appropriate Chinese agricultural, sericultural, and other technologies was a deliberate, closely-considered, and central goal of the Macartney embassy.[20] The irony here is difficult to miss: the British considered themselves so advanced in terms of *general* scientific understanding, that they presumed to be able to make best use even of technologies yet-unknown to them – and seemed to consider this, in fact, their prerogative. Joseph Banks' letters on the matter alone make this amply clear; to say nothing of Macartney's own words. But in broader terms, Drayton, echoing Adas, articulates that intersection of scientism and imperialism that it is the project of this thesis to examine at the textual level. As he puts it:

> It may seem perverse, indeed an oxymoron, to conjecture an imperialism of the Enlightenment. Yet benevolent and emancipatory hopes... easily lent their sanction to coercive projects. British 'improvers' moved, at home and abroad, in the faith that they ultimately knew better than those on the ground. Their confidence depended, in part, on the assumption that they possessed a more profound understanding of how Nature worked.... The Scientific Revolution, by which we mean the rise of an increasingly mathematical and mechanistic approach to the world, appeared to offer Europeans new and special modes of reason. (90)

In Drayton's view, this “mathematical and mechanistic approach to the world” spawned a belief that possessing knowledge of the transcendent laws which governed nature also granted – and perhaps even obliged – the application of such knowledge to the governing of *peoples.* Discussing the rationale for the institution of reforms leading to the metric

20. Besides Drayton, for detailed discussion of this topic, see Maxine Berg's “Macartney’s Things. Were They Useful? Knowledge and the Trade to China in the Eighteenth Century”; and Peter J. Kitson, *Forging Romantic China*, chapter five.

system in Jacobin France – the, as it were, internalization of scientific principles and methods (such as quantification) as political architecture – he is frank: “progress depended on the application of the Order of Nature to human society” (90). This is scientism in action; science deployed in the Adornan sense, as an imperial tool to order and subjugate, which, by a clever circularity of reasoning, justifies itself by recourse to itself. That is, by recourse to its derivation from a body of knowledge presumed to be all of: objective, universal in scope, and necessary to the forward march of civilization. And therefore beyond reproach. This tendency of scientistic thought is what we shall find budding in Nieuhof, scorned in Temple, and openly blooming in Macartney and Houckgeest. By giving the sheen of civilizing progress to imperial sprawl, scientism validated imperial aggressions. And indeed, to demand of him a last example, Drayton describes how, in Georgian Britain:

> The faith that information was necessary for efficient government created new opportunities for men of science... For the concern of gentlemen like Banks or [Arthur] Young to expand the Crown's efficiency was answered by the desire of statesmen and civil servants to become (or appear to be) agents of progress. (91)

Science by the late premodern had attained connotations of enlightened progress and social cache, and enjoyed a firm alliance to the ruling status quo throughout Western Europe.[21] And for that reason, British empire appropriated scientific assumptions, scientific methods, and actual scientists – the whole project buttressed by an unshakeable faith in the inherent goodness of science itself – as vital tools for the spread and maintenance of its power, both at home and abroad.

Peter J. Kitson

Kitson's approach to “problematizing” stale Sino-European historiography is most similar to, and openly inspired by, Markley's (8). *Forging Romantic China* centers on a number of texts from the British Romantic period that Kitson tentatively identifies as constituting a “Romantic Sinology.” This term he employs to underscore the influence of works by writers spanning Thomas Percy, William Jones, and, of course, Lord Macartney,

21. Further to this topic: Lisa Jardine's *Going Dutch: How England Plundered Holland's Glory* offers several case studies of just this dynamic, tracing with great dexterity the movements of scientific men and ideas amongst the 17th and 18th century aristocratic Western circles where these associations were largely formed.

in both shaping contemporary British conceptions of China and anticipating academic Sinology in the strict sense. Perhaps most germanely, Kitson explains that this body of texts “[claimed] validation by a personal knowledge of China... through participation in the Macartney and Amherst embassies, the British East India trade company at Canton,” or missionary work (13). Gesturing in the direction of my own research, Kitson finds Romantic Sinology characterised by an “insistence” on “first-hand encounter... conducted according to empirical and scientific assumptions” (14), by which it “sought to substitute... chinoiserie fantasy with another, 'real' China that was both knowable and substantial, but increasingly the locus of illegitimacy and stagnation, capable of being understood and controlled” (15). Although the relationship between these “scientific assumptions” and the notion that China could be “understood and controlled” is not the main focus of Kitson's work, it is telling nonetheless that he identifies, and almost takes as a given, the importance of what I have called scientism in shaping British attitudes towards China. Western Europe has always seen in China an image half comprised of its own anxiety – it still does. Kitson's work foregrounds this dynamic, in great socio-historical detail, and so doing emphasizes the ideological basis of Eurocentric conceptions of China whose factuality modern scholarship increasingly challenges.

Summation

So where does this leave us? A diverse array of scholars, having approached the same general theme from a divers array of angles, have all arrived at a similar conclusion: that the widely circulated notion that premodern China, and particularly the Qing dynasty, was technologically stagnant, even obsolescent – is simply not supported by the facts. Even Needham's analysis, as problematic as it is, acknowledges this. Pomeranz' direct comparisons of premodern Western European and Yangzi-region Chinese manufacturing and agricultural technologies finds neither side clearly superior until Britain's ability to exploit both native and colonial resources set the stage for the Industrial Revolution. Bray's work approaches the topic of Chinese techne from a Chinese perspective; rather than investigating why the Chinese did not develop their manufacturing along increasingly efficiency-oriented, Western European lines, she explores the intricate symbolism of agriculture and sericulture to the late-Ming and Qing Chinese, and finds there an active attempt to use such technologies to achieve the (non-capitalistic) ends of a stable, well ordered society. Markley, Kitson, and Blue, in their various assays of pre-modern English

literature, all accentuate the former plasticity of China in the Western imagination. So doing, they underscore the extent to which modern notions of Qing stagnation and decadence are an *a posteriori* creation. One whose prevalence Blue, especially, argues is the legacy of generations of Western intellectuals whose imbrication within European imperialist and proto-capitalist ideologies biased them towards conceptions of China that abetted imperialist goals. In his way, Hart rather extends Blue's general thesis to demonstrate how modern scholarship, even in its attempts to move past essentialising, Eurocentric notions of China and the West, continue to do so by allowing essentialising, Eurocentric notions to premise the way China's scientific history is studied at all. Adas' research lays bare the role that scientism, as an ideology of natural mastery, played in supporting the development of ethnocentric, racist cultural narratives throughout Western Europe – including, notably, the justification of colonisation. And finally, Drayton's work on the instrumentality of men of science to the spread of British empire offers a pertinent case study, at the institutional level, of the amenability of scientism to imperialism.

And on that last note, it will behove me to make clear that this thesis does not seek to claim, as if for the first time, that scientism has historically been an invaluable ideological support to Western imperialism; because, as we have just seen, that argument has already been made by more than one researcher of markedly greater prominence than myself. Rather, my research begins from the understanding – hinted at by some of the scholars aforementioned, and stated outright by others – that scientism and imperialism's sordid history as bedfellows has already been well demonstrated on a broad scale: from the level of individual scientists (like Joseph Banks) to the movements of institutions (like Kew Gardens or the VOC). What has been less often studied is what the relationship between these ideologies looks like in the text itself. And it is to that arena that I now head; by focusing my analysis there, I hope to throw a new ray upon the various and subtle ways that in human thought, and subsequently, writing, scientism and imperialism have historically been intertwined.

Chapter Two: New Lands, New Measures, Nieuhof

> Dutch engagement with the Chinese famously began with the Dutch navy's capture of two Portuguese vessels carrying Chinese porcelain, first in 1600 and

> again in 1602. The subsequent sale of these objects in Amsterdam marked the beginning of a Dutch taste for Chinese ceramics and a yearning for Chinese goods generally. The oft-quoted statistic, that by 1638 over three million pieces of Chinese porcelain had been shipped to the Netherlands, is just one of many indications that the Dutch were indeed avid consumers of Chinese exports. The consumption of trade objects and the acquisition of less physical goods often walk hand in hand, and the Dutch were as eager for information about China's history, government, language and religion as they were for material products. (Odell; Clothing, Customs, and Mercantilism, 141)

The consumption of trade objects and the acquisition of less physical goods indeed walk hand in hand, as Dawn Odell (2002) describes in her work on the reciprocally ethnographic gazes of the premodern Dutch and Chinese, and how these gazes were reflected in the trade between the nations. In her article, Odell is careful to note that the cultural representations she is interested in – that is, the echoes of depictions such as we find both textually and pictorially in Nieuhof, which become later appropriated as chinoiserie – are not strictly speaking “scientific” works (i.e. knowledge obtained for knowledge's sake) but the result of “knowledge put in the service of mercantilism” (140). Ultimately, Odell claims that “distinctions between pictures *of* things, book illustrations for example, and pictures *as* or *on* things – decorated porcelain, wallpaper, and fabric – become blurred” (140-141). Although, as the quote above indicates, her focus is primarily visual, I heartily agree with Odell's assertion of the fundamental entanglement of the scientific with the mercantile – and therefore imperialistic – in premodern Dutch depictions of China, and find her concise analysis a useful introduction to the history and immediate context of Nieuhof's *An Embassy from the East India Company*. For Nieuhof's travelogue, as we shall presently see, explicitly identified itself as a scientific undertaking, which means that to properly contextualise its inscriptions and illustrations of the Chinese, we must try to decode the scientistic gestures that it made central to its narrative.

Martinio Martini

What Odell's summary does not touch upon is the riotous change in management that was taking place in Imperial China in the mid-17th century, just prior to Nieuhof's embassy. In 1653, sixteen years before Nieuhof's own publication, Jesuit Father Martinio Martini published his *De Bello Tartarico Historia*, a first-hand account of the recent Manchu deposition of the Ming. As detailed in Van Kley's (1971) work on comparative premodern

and modern European responses to news about Chinese political events, Martini's dynasty-spanning account described:

> [T]he history of hostility between the Chinese and the Tartars north of the Great Wall: the thirteenth-century Mongol Conquest and the resulting Yuan Dynasty, the Ming restoration of 1368, and the late Ming's growing difficulty with the Tartars. He also described the Manchu people, customs, government, and military techniques. He described the growth of Manchu power in the northeast and the Manchu rulers – Nurhachi, Abahai, and Dorgon. Then Martini analysed the internal problems of the late Ming Dynasty: oppressive taxation, corruption, and arbitrary eunuch power at court, and the personal weakness and avarice of the Ch'ung-cheng emperor. Imperial greediness and mismanagement of public affairs, he explained, alienated Manchu chieftains as well as Chinese officials and subjects. (563-564)

Martini's book included much in the way of sordid detail as well, such as a description of the last Ming Emperor, Ch'ung-cheng's, final actions as Han rebel Li Tzu-ch'eng marched on the imperial palace in 1644. The scene unfolds like a Greek tragedy: “As Li's army, aided by traitors within the capital, entered Peking, the emperor, according to Martini, stabbed to death his young daughter, wrote a letter in his own blood accusing high officials of treason, and then hanged himself with his garter from a plum tree in the palace garden” (Van Kley, 564). Li then declares himself the new emperor, but is not able to secure the support of the North's most powerful Han military commander, who betrays him by instead making a fateful pact with the Manchu to allow their armies free passage to Peking. And so to Peking they marched.

Martini's book was a sensation, and much of its content eventually filtered, in the unattributed style of the day, into Dutch news periodicals such as the *Hollandtsche Mercurius* (Aug, 1654).[22] By the time of Nieuhof's departure to China in 1655 as party of the De Goyer and De Keyzer embassy, not only had the rise of the Qing become, in great part due to Martini's book, well known to the West, but a previous Dutch embassy to China, headed by Zacharias Wagenaer, had already been dispatched in an attempt to negotiate open trade with the new Manchu rulers – and failed utterly.[23] It was amidst this atmosphere of tension, excitement, and possibility that Nieuhof's embassy set sail for the East, the economic hopes of the Dutch Republic weighing heavily on their shoulders. The

22. See Van Kley (563). It is also worth noting that Nieuhof himself was quite familiar with Martinio's story, and names Martinio in the early pages of his travelogue as the European responsible for first bringing news of the new Tartar rulers of China (20).

23. See Iris van der Knaap, “The story of the first Dutch embassy to the emperor of China: An analysis of the different influences on the representation of China in Het Gezantschap (1665),” (54).

journal, notes, and illustrations Nieuhof made while in China, which would later bring him such fame, he after his return to Holland entrusted to his brother Hendrik, who was tasked with making publication arrangements. Hendrik also contributed the dedication to the first Dutch edition of Johan's travelogue; little else, however, is known of the younger Nieuhof, and the full extent of his contributions to *An Embassy from the East India Company* remains speculative.[24]

Van Meur's frontispiece

Nieuhof's travelogue opens in particularly grand fashion. Although the lavish visual accompaniment to Nieuhof's text is not the object of this study – nor need it be, as it has been extensively treated by others, and continues to dominate study of Nieuhof's travelogue generally – I can hardly discuss *An Embassy from the East India Company* without mentioning this aspect of the book at all. The travelogue's visual media were too prominent from even its earliest publications to simply pass over without comment.[25] And perhaps the best known among these is the ornate frontispiece with which van Meurs opens his publication of the travelogue – and which John Ogilby used as well in his later English translation, whose 1673 second edition is the basis for my analysis (see fig. 1 in "Images"). Schmidt's analysis of the frontispiece as a generic trope and hallmark of premodern Dutch geographies certainly applies to Nieuhof's book, with its famous engraving of a young, statuesque "Grand Tartar Cham":

> The performance began at once with the engraved frontispiece, which, in the case of Dutch-made product – just as was the case with the preface – was well-nigh obligatory. The frontispiece established the aesthetic style for the volume; it offered a window onto the bookmaker's slant on the material and his or her strategy of pictorial presentation. It also invited the viewer in. Handsomely engraved (or etched) and often signed by a known artist – not at all standard practice for book illustrations – the frontispiece characteristically depicted an allegorical figure associated with the region, or perhaps a more generic representation of History (Clio) or Geography. This central figure was typically surrounded by a mass of swirling artifacts, commercial products, ethnographic "types," exotic flora and fauna – all meant to convey the richness of the region. The frontispiece, in other words, replicated in visual terms the

24. See Sun (15-17; 25).

25. This is in fact the focus of Jin Sun's "The Illusion of Verisimilitude: Johan Nieuhof's Images of China"; but see also Dawn Odell, "Clothing, Customs and Mercantilism: Dutch and Chinese Ethnographies in the Seventeenth Century," and "Soul of Transactions: Illustration and Johan Nieuhof's Travels in China"; and Benjamin Schmidt's *Inventing Exoticism: Geography, Globalism, and Europe's Early Modern World*.

textual hodgepodge housed within. (59)

To keep from wandering too far afield, I would like to concentrate my analysis on the effect of the frontispiece specifically in relation to the title page – Ogilby's – that follows it. The frontispiece itself stands as an archetypal example of Schmidt's description: we find the Grand Tartar Cham enthroned, surrounded by a swarm of armed body guards and attendants, all handsomely arrayed. Beneath his feet helplessly “writhe” a few half naked prisoners, one of whom appears with his head in an Oriental pillory, and another of whom beseeches him. The unmoved Cham stares into the distance, one hand perched possessively atop a giant globe, his other arm akimbo, as if to challenge any comers. The symbolism is obvious.

On one level, the scene here is mere spectacle, a blood-and-brocade seduction of the eye that, perhaps pandering to European expectations, combines a certain level of brutality with the exotic grandeur of the Cham's dress and retinue – and promises novelty and adventure in the narrative to come. It is striking even today; in premodern Europe it must have been dazzling, as one of the first widely-published images of China's new ruler (if very clearly not an unidealized one), and the more impressive for that. But I submit that, for all that it was more titillating an entry than the wall of text that follows it, it must be understood in connection to the subsequent title page.

And the title page in question is, frankly, a visual cacophony (see fig. 2 in “Images”). A waterfall of different typefaces in different sizes cascades down the page, announcing the work's full title, which attenuates finally to: “...Wherein The Cities, Towns, Villages, Ports, Rivers, &c in their Passages from Canton to Peking Are Ingeniously Describ'd by M John Nieuhoff, Steward to Ambassadors.” From its literal first pages, we find Nieuhof's travelogue presented as a thorough survey of China's manmade and natural features alike – a full accounting of the region's human and nonhuman elements. That is, an encyclopedia. This encyclopedic scope, coming so soon after the impressive and theatrical frontispiece, reads like an assurance: the imposition of order upon a threatening Eastern Other (recently depicted in martial terms, remember; the Cham's retinue is a hedgehog-collective of bristling spears). One which, in this case, is quarantined off from the rest of the travelogue by a veritable textual palisade, and later, map. But the Grand Cham is no match for the wily Western European imagination; however fierce he may be on the battlefield, our imperial diplomat will (and over the course of his narrative, does) force him and his people to submit to the terms of Western conceptualization. His land will

be drawn up and quantified (and as mentioned, a map follows close by to do exactly that); his people typified and assessed against European standards of comportment; his natural resources located and speculated upon; and his useful techne – with any luck – appropriated. This is the promise of a title page which literally reduces an entire empire, a people, to the terms of a European narrative: a list of things “ingeniously describ'd” by a Dutchman. A phrase which implies in the first place that China *could be described* in Western terms – demystified, and translated into known units. And this, I will point out, is the only context into which the frontispiece *can* be put, since it contains no text of its own besides the abbreviated title.[26]

Different editions of the travelogue might have produced very different effects with their own title pages, of course: but the point of my cursory reading of these two pages is not to pretend to exhaust their symbolic potential – much less that of the myriad other illustrations that complement Nieuhof's text – but rather to emphasize that none of the visual materials included in any edition of Nieuhof's travelogue would have been experienced by readers in isolation. The visuals in Nieuhof's book, although more immediate than the surrounding text, existed in a necessary relationship *with* that text. Outside of it, they would have been incomprehensible. Their role in context – and *as* context – was to bolster the apparent truthfulness of the text with various detailed illustrations that, whatever their origins, were meant to elaborate and reinforce the authority of the narrative. Dawn Odell explains in her “Soul of Transactions” (2001): “As the believability of travel books is more often called into question,” in the latter half of the seventeenth century, “and the integrity of their authors, publishers and patrons more open to doubt, the illustrations within the books become correspondingly more lavish and abundant” (223). This indicates that although illustrations became an increasingly important aspect of travel books from the late 17th century on, nevertheless, their role was still essentially auxiliary. Odell ends her essay by declaring definitively that “[i]magery alone is not the 'soul of the transaction', for it is the play between text and image in Nieuhof's work that unites the depiction of a personal journey with the impartiality of a merchant traveller” (242).[27]

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26. And in the original Dutch version, the note that it was produced for van Meurs; Ogilby conveniently removes this.

27. To clarify here, Odell contrasts the greater impartiality of merchants' accounts of China with the necessarily more “intimate” accounts of missionaries, whose end game of prosyletization led them to develop a familiarity with the Chinese that for merchants would have been superfluous. See Odell, “Soul of Transactions” (242).

Imagery's role in travelogues was also, in ideological terms, essentially scientistic. Schmidt touches upon this aspect of travel books such as Nieuhof's with an especially vivid metaphor[28]:

> Dutch geography, in its relentless recourse to pictures and forms of mimetic representation, provided a visual spectacle as well as a lesson in observation, and it resembled in this way both the popular spectacle of the anatomy theater and the graphic illustrations of the post-Vesalian anatomy book. It offered, in short, the chance for *autopsia.* (86)

Schmidt is on the money here: the anatomy textbook's reduction of bodies to uniform, universalized pieces, like so many little cogs in a machine, indeed finds a parallel in the premodern travelogue's reduction of foreign peoples to uniform, universalized stereotypes. But whereas Schmidt detects this parallel only in the visual dimension of Nieuhof's travelogue (presumably because he has only looked for it there), I argue that such scientistic reductions are as characteristic of the diplomat's text as the visual media that accompanied it. Considered as a finished object, Nieuhof's travelogue deserves attention for the self-consciously didactic, encyclopedic stance it takes towards its readers across its media. A stance characterised by the insistent deployment of both thematic and semantic scientism, both of which *An Embassy from the East India Company* evinces from its literal first pages.

Nieuhof's journal: of travellers and scholars

And in fact, it does so – or rather, continues to do so – quite flamboyantly, once the journal itself commences. It is with considerable pomp, and not a little cheek, that Johan Nieuhof begins his travelogue neither by introducing the ambassadorial retinue of which he was a part, nor by addressing its diplomatic goals, but by celebrating travel itself as the highest mode of learning. This he does with a paean to history's greatest travellers – into which august company he squarely, self-consciously inserts himself. But perhaps unexpectedly, Nieuhof opens not on an anecdote about the Chinese, but rather the ancient Lacedaemonians. Weighing their isolationist tendencies against the famously

28. It will be noted, however, that Schmidt disagrees that travel book illustrations were less important than the text. On the contrary, his analysis emphasizes the importance of these illustrations so heavily that the titular author is reduced to the position of tool in the hands of an all-powerful publisher – an argument that I find overstated, for reasons we shall consider up close in chapter six.

cosmopolitan “other Greeks and the Romans,” Nieuhof concludes in favour of the latter two on account of their worldliness – a trait he identifies as the basis of their various cultural achievements:

> But [the Lacedaemonians'] severer ways and starch'd Formalities were, both by the other Greeks and the Romans, utterly exploded, who knowing better things, readily indulged License to Travel where they might improve their Wealth, Literature, or Observation. And also we find by their most ancient and accurate Writers, that they neither spared Cost, Study, nor Pains, to be replenished with remote and transmarine Imbellishments, both of Arts, Science, and Industry. (2)

On the one hand, this anecdote can be understood as perhaps an implicit bow to the study of classical history, essential to any contemporary gentleman's education, and therefore to Nieuhof's integrity as a commentator on world history and cultures. But it is also an argument for world travel as fundamental to the progress of human understanding – and, as Nieuhof's specific example emphasizes, to the development of the classical age's great civilizations. Introductions, literarily as much as socially, are always symbolic: the twinning of empire and learning is the context into which Nieuhof places his work as a whole from its first sentence. It is the frame through which he intends us to view all that follows, and though that alone might justify him as an object for the current study, Nieuhof goes on to make his point plainer still.

He in fact takes great pains to do so. Following his indictment of the Lacedaemonians, Nieuhof turns his address to several semi-legendary figures: Emperor Trajan, King Mithridates, Tacitus, Democritus, Plato (1-2). All men whose various accomplishments, he explains, were facilitated by travel. Trajan, for instance, while engaged “in a Philosophical Inquisition concerning the Wonders of the Deep, and occult Nature of the Ocean,” ends up serendipitously storm-tossed all the way to India, where he can only sigh that he is too old to “penetrate” further, and discover more (2). Democritus is described as a pilgrim,

> [I]n quest of Science; who first addressed himself to the Aegyptian Priests, next to the Chaldeans, after to the Gymnosophists of India, from whose Magazines and... Fountains of Learning he returned rich, being freighted with a full Cargo both of Divine and Moral Principles. (2)

It may or may not be beside the point that figuring “Divine and Moral Principles” in mercantile terms seems almost cartoonishly Dutch in the context of the Dutch Republic's

golden age; but it is certainly worth noting how tightly Nieuhof's metaphor conflates economic gain, divine imperative, and education (both moral and not) – a very full cargo, indeed. Nieuhof also seems to conflate “Science” with divine and moral learning; although, after our previous discussion of Jorink and the Book of Nature, this will not be surprising. Travel, for Nieuhof, in a way that can seem surprisingly foreign to modern mindsets conditioned by the accessibility of even international travel, has little to do with leisure. By Nieuhof's official reckoning, the road is for revelations, a scholar's tool. The way by which the great man, whether ruler or sage, accumulates the store of his knowledge and builds the basis for later accomplishments.

Nieuhof ends his tour of history's great philosophers by noting the growing importance of European “navigators” to geographic and scientific discovery. “But before I engage myself, it seems also not amiss to set forth briefly the Division of the Universal Globe,” he says, before doing so with special reference to the European men who divided it (3). Again, the symbolic importance of Nieuhof's gesture is obvious, identifying his travelogue as explicitly concerned with, as we would deem them today, geography and ethnography; and furthermore, as aware of the gravity of undertaking a rare assay of the “Genius and Manners of the People, and Customs of the Place, and Countreys supposed by all Geographers to be the richest in the World, and where any Stranger formerly durst never attempt” (3). And, in a move that will have become tiresomely familiar by the end of this thesis, he then directly avows the disinterestedness of his undertaking:

> And herein (without breach of Modesty) I dare boldy affirm, that nothing considerable slipt my observation relating to my Design, and that in taking accurate Maps and Sketches, not onely of the Countrey and Townes, but also Beasts, Birds, Fishes, and Plants, and other rarities never divulged (as I am informed) heretofore.

Nieuhof's meagre gestures towards “Modesty” do little to mitigate the bravado of his claim. His parentheses hang off the passage like afterthoughts, and that is all they are; perfunctory, courteous – his statement of purpose is as heavy and self-important as van Meurs' frontispiece. He has already promised, as no “Stranger formerly durst,” to canvass China's people, here he further widens his scope to take in exactly everything else China has to offer. For the sake of the West, and that august lineage of learned men to whom he is so determined to be connected, he will faithfully describe every dish China serves him, in such exquisite detail that the entire Occidental world will be able to taste it – a task (as

he is informed) never before accomplished. His professional reputation is inextricably bound up with his noble “Design” to “divulge” China's secrets.

Again, that there is precedent to this rhetorical stance does not diminish its significance[29] – conventions do not get to be conventions on accident. Nieuhof openly declares here what he has been implying all along: that he is indeed a man of learning, and in pursuit of learning; indeed heir to the illustrious elite into whose company he has placed himself. If anyone's account of China can be trusted, it is his, for like the heroic scholars he has listed, he too is determined to travel the world “in quest of Science.”

Despite its lofty pretensions, Nieuhof's text very much follows the fashion of its day, both in its tendency to hyperbole and in its heavy reliance on material poached from other travelogues. Ambassador Vincent Paets, who headed the second VOC embassy to China in 1666, found *An Embassy from the East India Company* “exaggerated and unfaithful”. A century later, Isaac Titsingh, head of the embassy in which Houckgeest served, would decry it as “too much embellished” (both quoted in Sun, 16-17). And on this point, Paets and Titsingh were not wholly incorrect. Schmidt and Odell have both spilt considerable ink stressing that premodern travelogues cannot, by any stretch of the imagination, be characterised by either their modesty or factuality. But as I have already suggested, the genre's rhetorical flourishes and formalities are precisely what makes it such a rich vein of ideological ore: its tropes speak to its standards and priorities. And verisimilitude was clearly important to Nieuhof and his publisher, even if strict factuality was not. In Odell's work on the patchwork heterogeneity of Nieuhof's text, she observes that Nieuhof incorporates “the work of Martinio Martini (1614-1661) for descriptions of Chinese provinces through which the Dutch embassy did not travel,” going on to explain: “In the seventeenth century, making unacknowledged use of another writer's work was commonplace publishing practice. That Nieuhof [does so] is not remarkable, but that [his] work is deliberately structured to hide that fact behind a seemingly unified voice is” (Odell, “Soul of Transactions,” 229). Given my interest in the conceptual framework underpinning Nieuhof's text, the actual authenticity of his supposedly first-hand observations is moot; what is more significant is that he finds it important to strike a pose of objectivity in any case.

29. See Sun's discussion of Engelbert Kaempfer's travelogue upon Japan (15-16). Kaempfer's embassy travelled to China in 1690, and his travelogue followed Nieuhof's, but Sun's point is to establish that by the late 17th century, authorial testimony to the purity and veracity of their own text was already firmly established, even a formality.

Invoking, assessing, describing China

All of which is to say, that the famous illustrations that accompany Nieuhof's text are only the most obvious part of a posturing towards objectivity that in fact permeates the travelogue. Nieuhof continues his introduction with a summary of the information known of China at that time, and his approach to the task helps to define what I have called semantic scientism. Firstly, he spends several long, hair-splitting paragraphs merely tracing the etymology of the word “China.” One cannot but recall Adorno and Horkheimer's description of Enlightenment methodology: apprehension, categorization, superordination – the means by which the Western scientific intellect appropriates its surrounding world. Magicians and scientists alike believe in the power of names, naming; there is something obsessive about it, in Nieuhof's work and in general. The Frankfurt Schoolers describe the latter as the successors of the former:

> The scientific calculation of events annuls the account of them which thought had once given in myth. Myth sought to report, to name, to tell of origins – but therefore also to narrate, record, explain. This tendency was reinforced by the recording and collecting of myths. From a record, they soon became a teaching. Each ritual contains a representation of how things happen and of the specific process which is to be influenced by magic. (5)

As if summoning from a grimoire, or for that matter invoking, in the Greek manner, a deity by listing its epithets, Nieuhof begins his textual re/construction of China by speaking its every name, both conjuring and delimiting, directing it. A feeling emphasized by his subsequent index of all of China's known provinces, down to its major and minor cities, and number of inhabitants. He precedes his journal proper, in fact, with a detailed listing of the cities, population stats, notable wares, and primary features of all the Chinese provinces he was not, during his journey, able to visit in person (9-20). A feat enabled, he tells us, by his being able to recourse to official Chinese “Register-Books” to fill in the gaps of his first-hand knowledge.[30] He provides geographical and demographical taxonomies for the provinces he actually did visit as well. They occur throughout his journal, inserted as a matter of course wherever he documents his embassy's leaving one province to enter the next. These crisp taxonomical lists divide provinces into capital cities, great cities, the

30. About which books he says little else (8), but if Odell and Schmidt are right, then this information may have been taken from several sources, including Martini.

small cities “commanded” over by the great cities, and finally, garrisons.[31] I posit that this desire to quantify China – to translate it into a tidy list of concrete values – is an effort to force it, conceptually, fully into view; to make it comprehensible in Western scientific terms that it might later be made compliant to them. We will recall here Drayton's claim that the Scientific Revolution was characterised by an “increasingly mathematical and mechanistic approach to the world” (90). And this is a tactic we will find, and examine, again in later surveys of Macartney and Houckgeest – although neither of these later diplomats reaches Nieuhof's level of pedantry in the matter. Nonetheless, I take it as significant that this approach to understanding and describing China appears in the earliest of our travelogues from its introductory pages.

I also take as significant the thoroughness of Nieuhof's introductory description of China, which not only renders to the longitudinal coordinates its exact size, and lists the predominating terrains across its extent, but insistently assesses these in light of China's potential vulnerability to military invasion:

> [I]t seems a world in itself... where the Sea borders, it hath so many Islands, Banks, Flats, and blind Rocks, that it is altogether unsafe to approach China on that side with any great Ships of Men of War. On the West, and somewhat toward the South, lie the Woods and Hills of Tamessus, which are so thick and high, that it is altogether unpenetrable on that side, and which separates China from the next bordering Asia, and the lesser neighboring Kingdoms; all which adds to the Defense and Protection of this Empire. Toward the North and West it is also sufficiently secur'd against all Invasions by the Sandy and dry Flats of Samo, which endanger all Vessels that attempt any Landings in those parts. Lastly, the kingdom has toward the North a great Wall, which the Family and Branch of *Cina* built against the Invasion of the Tartars 215 Years before the Birth of Christ; but in what condition this Wall is at present, and how far it extends, we shall treat at large in the description of the province of Peking. (7)

The phrase “a world in itself” is telling, framing China in terms of a new frontier ready to be opened, conceptually first of all, to the West. How? Through naming, description, measurement, *assessment*: that Nieuhof produced his quantifications of China as a representative of a country with no designs on actually invading China, begs the question of his preoccupation with its assailability – its capacities for “Defense and Protection” against “Invasions.” Other key locations within China are surveyed in this same way. For

31. For instance, his treatment of the provinces of Nanking (Nanjing) (70), Xantung (90-91). Incidentally, regarding Nieuhof's “Peking,” which is today's “Beijing”: I have provided modern translations for my authors' often idiosyncratic renderings of Chinese place names where possible, but these have not always been easy to determine. Generally speaking, this will not impinge on my analysis, since geographic specificity is not my focus.

example, Macao:

> Whose Wall is wash'd round about by the Sea, except on the North-side, where it joins to the Land by a little Slip, so that by the Sea on the one side, and the Mountainous Situation on the other, it is held invincible against the Power and Strength of any whatsoever. (31)

We will see this tendency again in Macartney, who makes no attempt to hide his tactical assessments of the Chinese coast (162-163); descriptions that, even aside from their potential usefulness as military reconnaissance, helped seed a cultural narrative about China as a stubbornly outmoded empire in decline (Kitson, ch. 5). But Macartney's Britain is at the time of his writing economically dependent on and indebted to China (Kitson, 157), a tense state of affairs that might plausibly justify military preparedness. Nieuhof's United Provinces had no substantial relation to China at all during his writing – establishing one was his embassy's impetus – so the aggression of his geographic gaze cannot be explained in the same terms. A point which makes consideration of ideological influences (as opposed to pressing external contingencies) upon his conceptualization of China even more difficult to overlook in Nieuhof's case than in Macartney's.

Recording the Tartar fall out

Additionally, and though it does not obviously qualify as an example of scientism, there is one other way that Nieuhof betrays his interest in the military prowess and fallibilities of the Chinese, and seems to speak to an imperialist desire to appraise the military vigour of the empire: his inveterate need to document the effects of the Tartar invasion upon every city he passes. His treatment of this topic is too pervasive to treat in any significant depth without spawning a whole second thesis, but, to review just a few pages chosen at random from his journal, we find descriptions of: the effects of the Tartar invasion upon the environs of Pekinnsa (60); the sieges of Canchu and Nanchang, and dramatic fall of the latter to Tartar forces despite the actions of the heroic commander Kiuns (63-64); the utter ruin of Tanglieu (71); and finally, the luck of former capital city Nanking (Nanjing), which astoundingly escaped mistreatment by the Tartars altogether, aside from the spiteful destruction of the imperial palace (76). These passages are not thematically scientistic; most eschew any sort of technical detail about military manoeuvres or techne. However, as in his story about Nanchang, such details are

sometimes not only included, but very exacting; even when they are not, these passages are indisputable evidence that Nieuhof was preoccupied with cataloguing the fall-out of war. For example, the Tartars' siege of Nanchang included diverting a river into a trench around the city, and then “blocking it up with Vessels” to prevent any supplies or aid to reach its inhabitants (64). Such descriptions, if habitual, might amount to a systematic inventory that could be interpreted as scientistic, but Nieuhof's accounts do not consistently provide such details (although this may have been because they were not always available to him).

In any case, read against his personal, more obviously scientistic assessments of China's geography, demography, and military vulnerabilities, these records of the “unmerciful Tartars... who have laid waste abundance of noble Cities, Towns, and Villages (which are now places for Birds and Beasts to roost in)” (48) insist on descriptions of China grounded in military imagery – specifically the imagery of desolation. At the very least, these passages indicate that Nieuhof had a vested and ongoing interest in China's recent military history, and perhaps the foundation of the new Qing dynasty particularly. This supports my claim that one of the imperialist motivations for his travelogue was a general reconnaissance of the empire. Nieuhof meant to size up the new regime, and page after page, he did. And though this project was certainly not the expression of a literal desire for or anticipation of war; in a more general sense, Chinese military strength was clearly a topic that weighed heavily upon Nieuhof's mind. Enough so that he felt compelled to document China's recent war history in addition to making more pointed commentary about the vulnerabilities of specific regions.[32]

This aspect of Nieuhof's travelogue becomes even clearer when we compare his aforementioned description of China's general extent with Athanasius Kircher's description of the same in the *China Illustrata* (1667), excerpts of which Ogilby included in his editions of Nieuhof's travelogue. Appended to Nieuhof's text as “An Appendix: or Special Remarks taken at large out of Athanasius Kircher's Antiquities of China,” in it Kircher measures the “the largest and vastest of Kingdoms”:

> On the East it is compassed with the Eastern Ocean; On the North it hath Tartary adjoining, separated by a Wall, whose yet undiscover'd Bounds are extended even unto the Frozen Sea, and questionless they are in some part or other continu'd to the North part of America with Anian, whether it be a Straight

32. Or, as in his extended description of the great wall, both. He discusses its precise dimensions, history, and the sizeable garrisons it housed (130-131).

> or Isthmus; although unto this very time (as with great pains it was search'd after by the Fathers of our Society employ'd in China), the Limits of these vast Kingdoms and Lands have as yet been detected by no Person: On the West is encompassed partly with Ridges of most high Mountains, partly a sandy Desart and other Kingdoms... Lastly, on the South it is limited with the Sea, the Kingdoms of Toucbinum, Cochinachina, Laum, and others. The Latitude beginneth from 18 degrees, and extendeth it self up unto 43, that is it is distended by the interval of a thousand four hundred and forty Italian Miles from South to North, and from the West unto the East it almost consisteth of the same Distance. (Antiquities of China, 321)

Nieuhof too, elsewhere in his text, sets about identifying China's extent in latitudinal and longitudinal terms; but it is not the similarities between their passages that stands out. Rather, what is most striking about Kircher's and Nieuhof's cousin-passages is the different tone each takes towards its object. Kircher introduces the Great Wall initially only to admire that its bounds are “yet undiscover'd.” When he gets around to describing its purpose a couple paragraphs later, he seems most concerned with it as an amazing feat of ancient architecture, failing to share Nieuhof's interest in it as a fortification per se (322). What Kircher emphasizes instead is that the route he supposes may connect Asia to North America has yet to be verified by any fellow Jesuits. Enclosed with feigned modesty in a parenthesis, this self-conscious reference tints Kircher's entire passage, tacitly pinning the trustworthiness of his description to the “great pains” taken by his famously well-educated religious order; an order that by Kircher's time was well aware of its status as the primary European custodian of first-hand information on China (Blue, 61). Whatever else this gesture accomplishes, it casts Kircher's measurement of China – both his literal, spatial measurement, and his assessment of Chinese civilization as a whole – in terms of religious, specifically Jesuitical, ideology. This does not preclude his text's also being informed by scientism – which it was. His close reckoning of China's size and shape (to the extent this was possible) and specification that he is using “Italian miles,” betray a scientistic assumption of precision as the shorthand of empirical honesty. But where Nieuhof's semantic scientism, imperialistically inflected, runs towards a more aggressive analysis of China's natural and man-made national defences, Kircher is merely descriptive. At most, his reference to the “great pains” taken by his religious order to discover China strongly hints at an opinion that much work was left to do – especially, we are liable to imagine, to the end of accomplishing Jesuitical aims at proselytization. Jesuit presence in China was not, after all, a happenstance. Not anymore than Nieuhof's embassy was. A point which only underscores how distinct Nieuhof's consistent attention

to China's vulnerabilities is by comparison, informed as it was by the 17th century's competitive imperialist race for overseas resources. But to be fair to Nieuhof, the aggression in his analyses of China is only latent, and he closes his journal by proposing that perhaps the Dutch might “assist his Imperial Majesty” with their ships “for the subduing” of notorious Ming loyalist and “ArchPyrate” Coxinga (139) (who would go on to oust the Dutch from Dutch Formosa in 1661).

It would be careless to read too much into a comparison of two single passages. Still, Kircher's is useful as evidence that scientific methods, and scientism itself, do not inevitably run towards the sort of military speculations that Nieuhof – and later, more famously, Macartney – records. On the contrary, scientism's aggression is inherently conceptual; on its own, it provides the illusion of control. But its abstraction makes it pliable, easily bent to support the various aims of otherwise distinct ideologies that cannot but gain from association with its noble connotations. Connotations, such as impartiality, that science itself only arguably and with qualification deserves.

Scientism and commodification

But the evidence of Nieuhof's imperialistically inflected scientism does not stop with his introductory passages on China. Ironically, one of the most enlightening passages in Nieuhof's early text is an aside about Java, home to the Dutch colony of Batavia and hub of Dutch-Asian trade in the 17th century, that he gives before beginning his journal proper. Describing the colony, Nieuhof explains that,

> [It] is situated in the Island of Great Java, and so fruitful in all manner of Cattel and Corn, that the learned Scaliger extoll'd this Island for one of the most fruitful and comprehensive Places in the whole World: for from hence comes not only Pepper, Ginger, Cinamon, and other spices in great abundance, but also all manner of tame and wild Cattel... It produces also all manner of Gems, Gold Mines, Precious Stones, and rich Silks... but [is] yet so subject to stormy and tempestuous Weather, that they are seldom free from Commotion'd Skies. (26)

This paragraph, so condensed it seems almost offhand, precedes several pages of the history of Dutch presence on the island. Considered in its own right, it is not, at first glance, remarkable. But put within the context of the island's contemporary history, and further, of his militaristic treatment of China, Nieuhof's decidedly economic description takes on a new light. China, then largely reckoned as impenetrable, is described in terms

of its formidable natural fortifications. But Java, long since infected by European presence, and laid open to mercantile development by both the Dutch and English – whose jealous skirmishes over the island make up the bulk of Nieuhof's narrative about it (26-28) – is given as the sum of its *commodities.* In neither case is Nieuhof's description incidental. China's unsurveyed and unattainable resources invite the diplomat's hungry speculation and hungrier quantification; whereas Java, as a conquered landscape, is reduced to a mere accounting of trade goods: the end result at which the former speculation and quantification aims.

To give another example of this dynamic, Nieuhof says of “Laos, Tunking, and Couchinchina” (which span modern day Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam): “These Countries are very fruitful in everything belonging to the sustenance of Mankind,” with “Trees and Fruits... [and] a Bean, which makes an Oyl or Juyce, by the Portuguese call'd Rosamalia” (30). It is rich in “Eagle-wood, which is a Purple color” and set with “good store of Linen, Silk, and Cotton” (30). A local monkey's blood also makes an “excellent Purple Dye” (30). As with Java, in the absence of more pressing concerns, the language of scientific categorization is used to translate a country into the commodities that make it attractive to the goals of empire, while its native inhabitants, if they are not useful or extraordinary, are shrunk to a footnote. Nieuhof's language in these examples illustrates, in miniature, a progression of scientistic assessment from an early stage of conceptualization characterised by the identification of resources/analysation of vulnerability to invasion (China), to a later stage characterised by the language of mercantile development (Java, etc.).

But where Nieuhof's descriptions of the riches of Java, Laos, Tunking, and Couchinchina rather take them for granted, casually listing their commodities but sparing them little other discussion, his descriptions of potential Chinese commodities tend to also include a vested interest in the technologies used to produce them. “Ucienjen,” for instance, is “a Village famous for Shipping... where lay great store of Vessels of several sorts and sizes... to lade with China Earthen Ware” (65) which is then shipped “through all China, but also through the whole World” (66). Presuming a competitive, stereotypically European view of trade, Nieuhof's party are surprised and admiring when the townsfolk tell them:

> [T]hat there was no better Porcelane made in all the Kingdom of China, than in the Village Sinktesuno... and they added withal (which greatly increased our

> wonder) that they did not fetch the Earth whereof this Porcelane is made out of the Province of Kiangsi, wherein this village is situated, but from the Province of Nanking. (66)

That Nieuhof's interest in Chinese manufacturing techne is thematically scientistic is obvious, but further, he relates in detail how and where the raw earth for the porcelain is obtained, how porcelain is made from it, what sorts of items are made from the porcelain, and even how these are typically decorated. His observations, in sum, read like a how-to guide. Regarding vessels ready for firing: they are “stopt” for thirty days total in an oven, the first fifteen over a live fire, and the last fifteen with the fire out, until cool. By now these careful quantifications should not be surprising: materials, locations, methods of production, production times – all the trappings of semantic scientism. Nieuhof habitually measures Chinese culture by literally measuring both its manufactures, and processes of manufacture.

The Chinese “Arts”

It might be noted, however, that Nieuhof rarely uses the words “science” or “technology” themselves. Rather, one of Nieuhof's more characteristic terms is “art,” under which heading he includes Chinese technologies. Of the residents of the province of Nanking (Nanjing), for example, Nieuhof says,

> The Natives of this Place are generally very Civil, Witty, Serviceable, and Mannerly: It likewise breeds great store of Handicrafts men, who prove most excellent in their several Arts... It produces great store of Cotton and Silk, which maintains there abundance of Weavers, who work in either Commodity; but this is the Womens Business, and the Men follow Husbandry and other Employments, or else look to the Children whilst the Women Spin... This Seat of Nanking is so famous through all China, that whatsoever is made in it, is preferr'd before any such thing of the likewise nature wrought in other parts of the Country. (69)

It does not seem accidental that Nieuhof so favourably describes the temperament of a people associated by the Chinese with quality craftsmanship; regardless, this passage demonstrates which Chinese “arts” Nieuhof is most often and most pointedly interested in. And while the diplomat elsewhere evinces a genuine curiosity about any of several other aspects of Chinese culture, his travelogue as a whole makes clear that his attention is especially invested in Chinese techne, especially manufacturing techne, which he takes

every opportunity to document. Of the small city of “Ufu,” for example, located on an island in the river “Kiang,” he writes that “This city is cri'd up through all China for Arms, the Inhabitants being most dextrous and exquisite in making all manner of Military Utensils” (72) (he also mentions, hearkening to our previous discussion of Nieuhof's military interests, that the town's “strong Block-houses” (guard houses) are not “Mann'd, or have any Guns mounted on them.”). “Pekkinsa” trades in “all Naval Materials, to the great benefit of the Inhabitants” (60). Macao “exceeds all others for great Cannon... they are the best of all India, being Cast of Chinese and Japanese copper, and are sent for far and near” (31). The province of Quantung (Guangdong) – which he exhaustively lists as possessing “great quantities of Gold, Pearl, Precious Stones, Silk, Quick-silver, Copper, Steel, Iron, Salt-petre, Eagle-Wood, and several other odiferous Woods” (35) – is also famous for the skill of its inhabitants:

> The People in thee Parts are very ingenious, laborious, and nimble, and can imitate any thing which they see made before them: and whatsoever the Portuguese bring thither out of Europe woven of Gold, Silver, or the like, which is strange unto them, they will immediately endeavor to work the same, and in short time will accomplish what they undertake: for I gave a Chinese Goldsmith a Silver Button to make a set by, and the next day he brought to my Lodging what I had bespoke, very curiously wrought, as if he had been us'd to such work, though he had never done the like before; which argues their Ingenuity to be very great. (35)

Here is proof not only of Nieuhof's keen interest in Chinese craftsmanship and manufacture, but an example of him empirically testing Chinese smithing “ingenuity.” It is impossible to know from what he has written what originally motivated his button solicitation, of course. Perhaps he was possessed by the spirit of inquiry, perhaps he merely needed new buttons (which do tend to be below appreciation until they're missing) – the options are not mutually exclusive. But what is clear is that Nieuhof was delighted and impressed by his experience with Chinese buttonsmithing, which he in fact does not represent in terms of buttonsmithing at all, but as hard evidence of Chinese craftsmanship and technological savvy in general.

The attempted appropriation of the “Lou-wa” birds:

Another illustrative example of Nieuhof's interest in Chinese techne: he records how at the river Tao (Danwen), near the small city of “Nynyang,” (Ninyang) local fisherman

plied their trade in a very unusual manner.

> [W]e saw them fish with a Bird, which they call Lou-wa... They have small Boats, very artificially made of Reeds or Bamboes.... and place the Bird perching upon the out-side of the Vessel, from when she suddenly shoots, and diving, swims under Water as fast as they can thrust forward their Cables with a light Pole: As soon as she has caught her Prey, she instantly appears above Water, the Master of the Boat standing ready to receive her, opens her Bill by force, and takes out the Dainty: Afterwards he turns her out again to catch more. (92)

Nieuhof gives a further few particulars of the birds, including their local market value translated into Dutch guilders (150). He then relates that his crew tried to purchase a couple of the marvellous animals from the fishermen in question, but were turned down. Following the description above, the significance of Nieuhof's attempt to purchase Lou-wa birds is obvious. Had we any doubt at this point that the Dutch were not only curious of Chinese technology, but actively seeking useful technologies to appropriate, this anecdote would have removed it.[33]

The Imperial palace

Nieuhof also takes great Interest in Chinese architecture, and his awe at the imperial Chinese Palace at Peking is superlative. “And to the end that all Men may be sensible how far this Court exceeds all the Royal Palaces in Europe, for Splendor, Art, Wealth, and Pleasure, I shall give you a large Account thereof, and of the Platform of it, which I took myself” (120). Again, as implied everywhere in Nieuhof's travelogue, veracity is conveyed by means of exact measurement – and here, his measurement of the Chinese Imperial Palace can be understood as measurement of Chinese achievement generally, for which the palace metonymically figures. It would be redundant to list all of Nieuhof's quantifications, which run to several pages, but it is notable that they are produced in addition to a detailed illustration of the palace: it was clearly of the utmost importance to Nieuhof that he capture its dimensions for European posterity. “All the Edifices, which are very many, are most richly adorn'd with gilt Galleries, Balcones, and Carv'd Imagery, to the

33. As a matter of background: Nieuhof's “Lou-wa birds” (Laogua) were cormorants, and there are places in China still today where they are employed to fish exactly as they were in Nieuhof's time, and well before. See for instance Andy Beal's “Dying Art of Chinese Cormorant Fishing - in Pictures.” And while it might be most correct to refer to cormorant fishing as a practice, Nieuhof clearly considers the birds as tools, which instrumental approach seems to validate referring to them, in context, as a technology.

admiration of all that ever saw them. Each Dwelling hath a large Penthouse, so that you may walk dry in Rainy Weather" (121). The Chinese ability to make pleasure weather-proof, and bend nature to their aesthetic demands, enchants Nieuhof. They bend nature for more practical reasons, too: Nieuhof explains, with geographic specificity, how a "Channel" that winds through the "whole Court, with several Windings and Turnings... serves to water the Gardens and Woods. This receives its Water from the river *Yo*, which springs from a Pool call'd *Si*, near to the mountain *Jaciven*" and is "so broad and deep, that it will bear great Vessels" bearing supplies from the outside world (121). Discussing the Peking gardens, he admires, "There is not any thing wherein the Chinese shew their Ingenuity more, than in [artificial] Rocks and Hills, which are so curiously wrought, that Art seems to exceed Nature" (121). He then gives a fascinating description of this peculiar fixture of wealthy estates:

> Artificial Mountains or Cliffs are commonly contriv'd with Chambers and Anti-Chambers, for a defence against the scorching Heat in Summer, and to refresh and delight the Spirits, for they commonly make their great Entertainments in these Grots, and the Learned seek to Study in them rather than any other Place. (122)

The enthusiasm of Nieuhof's many descriptions of the palace's features make clear how roundly impressed he is with it, especially as an expression of Chinese engineering skill. The Chinese' ability to redirect rivers and defy the rain and sun is, for him, connected to their ability to make art that "exceeds nature" – is this a particularly Dutch admiration, given the constant battle with elemental nature that typifies life in the low countries? Either way, it satisfies Adorno and Horkheimer's concept of science's mythological function.

But Nieuhof is not only concerned with the imperial court's management of their nonhuman environment. He is equally interested in the imperial palace as an instrument for the management of people: he meticulously describes the different compartments belonging to the emperor, the "several Women in... his seraglio," (120), the court children (121), as well as the numerous wings where one can find "a great many other Houses and Dwellings for their Priests, Artificers, Servants, and others" (121). This regard for the social utility of built spaces is even more explicit in the final section of his travelogue, his "A General Description of China," a portion of which he devotes to "The Courts of the Governors of Provinces." There, he spends several paragraphs describing not just the layouts of these court buildings, but who is allowed to use which rooms, and which gates,

on which occasions; and other related socio-spatial protocol. He explains the decorum surrounding the Emperor's furnishing of the courts for the appointed governors, who, to Nieuhof's surprise, are allowed on retirement “to take all the Household Good with him.” Afterwards, “the Court is furnished anew for the succeeding Governor” (203). There is an overarching preoccupation here with the relationship between society and the spaces it fills that strikes me as surprisingly modern. But regardless, the final impression his writings on the topic convey is that Nieuhof indeed thinks of Chinese courts (including the imperial court) as similar in kind to the other productions discussed in Chapter XI of his “General Description”: “Common Ways,” “Bridges,” “Ships” – that is, as a physical construction built to direct, and not merely house, people. To this end, even his accompanying birds-eye illustration of the imperial palace seems closer to a map than a mere record of architectural features (see fig. 3 in “Images”). Nieuhof, with great acuity, recognizes the built environment's symbolic social functions, and consequently subjects China's state buildings to searching analysis along just these lines – which leads him to create both textual and visual blueprints of the imperial palace, China's spatial and symbolic heart.

A General Description of China

And having now mentioned Nieuhof's “A General Description of China,” it seems appropriate to consider this unique bookend to his journal in greater depth. The “General Description” is a fascinating appendix, structured rather like a modern encyclopedia, or perhaps textbook, that reflects Nieuhof's scientistic predisposition even at the formal level. It is titled by topic: headings like “Of Idol Temples” and “Of Towers and Sea-marks” sit beside others like “Of Rivers, Waterfalls, Lakes &c” and “Of Animals.” A place for everything and everything in its place, the “General Description” finds all of China's human *and* nonhuman inhabitants snugly sorted into their respective chapters. It is impossible not to be reminded here of Nieuhof's introductory declaration to be the first to thoroughly investigate the “Genius and Manners of the People, and Customs of the Place, and Countreys supposed by all Geographers to be the richest in the World” (3) – a scope reflected in the thoroughness of the “General Description's” chaptering.

Of the chapters themselves, a couple deserve special attention. In Chapter XV, “Of Roots, Herbs, Flowers, Reeds, Trees, and Fruits,” Nieuhof makes the following assertion:

> And thus much I dare from my own knowledge affirm, That whatever is to be

> had in Europe, is likewise found in China; and if in truth there want any thing, Nature hath supply'd that single defect with divers other things beyond those we have in Europe. Now that it may be obvious to every Understanding, with what a copious Harvest of Fruits and Vegetables mild Nature has bles'd this Empire, and the Inhabitants thereof, I shall briefly discourse thereof as followeth. (212)

Epitomizing science put into the service of imperial greed, this twenty page chapter – one of the longest in the "General Description" – is a list of useful Chinese plants, where they are found (to the very city or mountain), and how they are used. I will refrain from giving specific examples presently, as we will be returning to this topic in my chapter on Macartney, when I compare Nieuhof's "General Description" to Macartney's similarly structured "Observations." But it suffices to say that Nieuhof openly identifies China's botanical riches as equal to, or perhaps surpassing, that of the entirety of Europe; and then declares that he will enumerate these for his audience – which he does with great gusto. I cannot read this chapter without again hearing Drayton's claim that one of the most important goals of the scientist-qua-imperial-agent was to "[name] the natural riches of new territories" (232) in preparation for their appropriation. Nieuhof's would-be study of Chinese botany was, at the end of the day, a thinly veiled VOC wishlist: a record of desired commodities which spanned medicines (213, for just one example), teas (215), cottons (217), timber (221), and innumerable other possible trade goods. It literally both names and locates scores of valuable Chinese plants, and where possible even relates how they are prepared or otherwise utilized – and consequently, makes it possible for us to ascertain that his previous descriptions of Chinese (and other) regions by way of their natural resources was not incidental, but part of a larger project to further Dutch trade by identifying potential commodities.

But besides identifying commodities, Nieuhof's "General Description" also gives us some direct insight into his measure of Chinese learning itself. In Chapter II, which concerns the "Characters, Language, Writing, and Literature of the Chinese," Nieuhof states:

> [T]hey are great Proficients in the Art of Astrology, and in several other Arts and Sciences; as also heretofore in that of Arithmetick, in the understanding whereof they have of late years decay'd, insomuch that now the Shop-keepers use Boards to tell upon, which are full of Holes; yet they are so ready at it, that with a Peg they know how to cast up an Accompt with as much Method and Expedition, as the most skillfull European with Counters. (154)

Nieuhof's valorisation of the premier sciences of his day rings full force here, but it is interesting that he feels the need to point out that the Chinese have “of late years decay'd” in their grasp of mathematics, when he then immediately qualifies that, nevertheless, they can keep accounts as well as any European. He asserts that Chinese astrologers are familiar with many more stars than European, but that their art is yet “full of Errors and Mistakes.” (154). “As to Physick and Chirurgery, they are very expert therein, and their Rules of Art differ not much from those of our European Physicians” (155), but Nieuhof is confounded by what he interprets as the small esteem “the Degree of Doctor” – which requires an examination in both Peking and Nanking – brings the Chinese compared to the designation philosopher (155), explaining that “this Degree [of Doctor], when obtain'd, doth advance neither the Honor or Respect of the Person” (155). Nieuhof closes out the chapter with several paragraphs' description of the Chinese bureaucratic examination system, the degrees it affords, and the differences between these (156-157). Overall, Nieuhof's assessment of Chinese learning is approving, and corroborates Blue's claim that 17th century European views of China, though increasingly varied, were still largely positive, and yet unbeholden to widespread accusations of cultural degeneracy (Blue, 60-70).

But Nieuhof is certainly not without his criticisms, and as the passage above indicates, these, when they occur, are blatantly scientistic in tone. In the following chapter (III), he complains that the Chinese' poor show at crafting great bells, given Europe's superior metallurgic prowess, “proceeds in all probability from their general averseness to deal with Foreigners; it being a Rule among them, to prohibit them entrance into their Country, at leastwise not to admit them farther than Frontires” (158). Implying a poor grasp of geometry, Nieuhof slates Chinese painting for both its flatness and poor media – “they neither understand the making of Shadows, nor have learned to temper their Colours with Oyl” (158). To Nieuhof's reckoning, and despite the compliments he pays the Chinese in other fields, the insularity of the Qing has prevented their flourishing in at least these arenas to European levels of achievement, an idea we will see again in our other diplomats' journals. These examples show us that Nieuhof did self-consciously measure the Chinese by their scientific and technological development, even if he didn't always find them to come up short. But the measurement, in this case, is less important than the ruler. Nieuhof's thinking demonstrates one of the most fundamental tropes of scientistic ideology, and one which would pick up increasingly ethnocentric ramifications, as Adas has argued, with the increasing valorisation of science in the West during the premodern

period (Adas, 203-205).

Appending the China Illustrata

And finally, before concluding with Nieuhof's travelogue, I will take a moment to quickly revisit Athanasius Kircher, a hundred-page extract of whose *China Illustrata* was, I have noted, included with Nieuhof's own text on publication.[34] The foremost Jesuit scholar of his time, Kircher's inclusion in Nieuhof's travelogue can be justified on a number of pragmatic grounds. As Schmidt has argued, one of the defining traits of premodern travel literature – Dutch especially – is an eye to marketing. The inclusion of Kircher within Nieuhof's travelogue was in fact the decision of English publisher Ogilby, but certainly, including two different accounts of China in a single, opulently illustrated book only doubled its appeal to those in a position, and of the disposition, to buy such leather-bound spectacles. And these were big business, indeed, even outwith the Netherlands.

But that only explains the most superficial appeal of adding Kircher to Nieuhof. The addition of *China Illustrata* to Nieuhof's travelogue can also be read as providing a gesture of deference towards Christian ideology that Nieuhof's own text does not. Many of Kircher's chapters relate almost exclusively to Christian presence in China. This is not surprising, of course, given that Kircher declares in his introductory chapter that the occasion for his writing is to prove the validity of the Nestorian Stele, and therefore that "the Gospel Preached formerly in China is the same with that which the Universal Catholick Roman Church enjoineth to be believ'd to this Day" (320). On the one hand, anyone familiar with the great rites controversy will understand the aim of this line of argumentation immediately. Kircher's treatise on China was not incidental, or written for knowledge's own sake, but a Jesuit propaganda meant to justify the order's accommodationist tendencies. By demonstrating that, after all, the culture being accommodated was not a heathen but a degenerate Christian one, he could argue that it fell well within the scope of holy rectification.[35] What was required was a bit of a light touch; and to that end, missionary appointees to the imperial retinue could use their positions to try and encourage the Chinese back to their purported roots. Michael Keevak has argued that the Eurocentricity of the narrative surrounding it may explain the stele's

34. See Michael Keevak, *The Story of a Stele: China's Nestorian Monument and its Reception in the West, 1625-1916* (61). Keevak is concerned with the importance of the Nestorian Stele to Western thought, but he gives a good overview of Kircher's extract as it came to find a home within Nieuhof's travelogue.
35. See Blue (61-62); Sun (9).

appeal to Europeans: “The [Nestorian Stele] was a self-interested point of access that appealed to readers because it was so 'Western,' even if in a larger context it was little more than an obscure piece of eighteenth-century limestone from a very brief moment when Christianity (in some form or another) had managed to gain a degree of official acceptance” (61). Building on Keevak's thought, perhaps the stele implied a universality to Christianity that comforted Europeans because it folded China back into a Western cosmological schema, without challenging any notion that European forms of Christianity were indeed the purest ones.

However, Kircher does depart from his religious agenda to treat of China more generally. On the whole, Kircher's ethnographic chapters are dense, detailed, and well-studied, if occasionally possessed by a tendency to wander. His eighth chapter, for instance, “Of the Correction of the Chinese Calendar, and how much Good redounded from thence,” begins with a discussion of the Chinese obsession for exact calendars – “without which they justly believ'd, that neither the Actions of Princes, or Histories of any Age could methodically be compos'd” (383). Kircher describes how this typically Chinese obsession, considered in relation to their outdated means of actually keeping time, paved the way for the introduction of astronomically advanced missionaries into the imperial court. This sort of critique would not be out of place in Nieuhof (or Macartney or Houckgeest). Kircher's account, however, ends many pages later with a series of cultural observations culminating, somewhat abruptly, in an unexpected discussion of Chinese concepts of beauty. There, Kircher relates how the practice of foot binding is a 2,800-year-old tradition to the Chinese, taken from the example of an ancient empress of celebrated elegance and allure, and since justified largely on those grounds (although he notes as well that some have told him that foot-binding was also valued for rendering wives unable to leave the private sphere to which they'd been consigned). Although Kircher is as interested in Chinese scientific and technological achievement as any of our other diplomats, and I think as beholden to scientistic measures of cultural sophistication, his treatments of this topic are less systematic, and his overall observations on China more miscellaneous.

Nonetheless, the *China Illustrata* was a closely observed and well-written assay of numerous aspects of Chinese culture, and stocked with rich visual media as well; by the time of Nieuhof's publication it had already found its reputation – so any new publication that aimed for similar status might well have been considered remiss not to acknowledge

it.[36] And acknowledge it Ogilby does; circling back to the beginning of this chapter, we will recall here how self-consciously, in his first paragraphs, Nieuhof inserts his travelogue into a larger, and grandiose, tradition of learning. Perhaps building from this foundation, or perhaps again merely intuiting a marketing opportunity, Ogilby's incorporation of Kircher into Nieuhof's work, by literally connecting Nieuhof's text to that of one of the foremost intellects of the age, performs Nieuhof's insertion at the formal level. And so doing, evinces a scientistic concern for the credibility of Nieuhof's travelogue that we will find paralleled, more emphatically, in the numerous paratexts that accompany Houckgeest's text. Kircher's addition to Nieuhof also overtly helps to develop the encyclopedic quality of the latter travelogue. Kircher's excerpt ends with a few lines from the publisher that indicate exactly this:

> Those that are earnest to make further scrutiny in quest of all these wonderful Relations, may resort to the Author himself, and to those in his Quotations; for this we thought a sufficient Appendix to the Dutch Embassy, the one seeming better to Illustrate the other, many of the same concerns being handled in both. (431)

Incidentally, this concern for the intellectual validity of *An Embassy from the East India Company* implies a somewhat greater consciousness on the part of premodern reading audiences of the difference between verisimilitude and factuality than the freely-plagiarizing tendencies of many travel book publishers might at first indicate. So perhaps Kircher's text was simply too well known by the time of Nieuhof's publication to be plagiarized discreetly. Either way, a care has been taken here, both in the adjoining of Kircher's work to Nieuhof's, and in its conscientious attribution to Kircher, that suggests that the larger travelogue thus composed was intended as a scholarly endeavour. One very much designed to withstand even, in its own words, the closest “scrutiny” of its sceptical readers. This gesture, when considered in context of the various other deferences to scientism within Nieuhof's travelogue, helps to make (if not actually settle) the case for scientism being, even in the mid-17th century, an important ideological component of the Dutch cultural imaginary, and not a solely Nieuhoffian trait.

And indeed, it must be mentioned that not everyone in the mid-17th century held science, or “natural philosophy” as it was often called at this time, in very high regard –

36. That said, Kircher's academic reputation was by no means beyond reproach, and while his *China Illustrata* was widely acknowledged a valuable work, opinions differed as to his efforts in other fields. See Thijs Weststeijn, “Vossius' Chinese Utopia,” (211-212).

some distrusted it outright. “But what reasonable sort of argument could possibly be made,” the modern reader asks, amusedly, bemusedly, or both, “against science?”

And that is an excellent question. Enter: Sir William Temple.

Chapter Three: Sir William Temple, the Anti-hof

> The same faculty of reason which gives mankind the great advantage and prerogative over the rest of creation, seems to make the greatest default of human nature; and subjects it to more troubles, miseries, or at least disquiet of life, than any other of its fellow creatures; 'tis this furnishes us with such variety of passions, and consequently of wants and desires, that none other feels; and these followed by infinite designs and endless pursuits, and improved by that restlessness of thought which is natural to most men, give him a condition of life suitable to that of his birth; so that he alone is born crying, he lives complaining, and dies disappointed. (Temple, Upon the Gardens of Epicurus, 3)

So, with great cheer, does Sir William Temple begin his famous essay “Upon the Gardens of Epicurus; or of Gardening in the Year 1685.” An extended and sophisticated meditation upon the relationship between human and nonhuman masquerading as a gardener's manual, Temple's essay, even down to its tone, epitomizes the esteem and social significance of the aristocratic gardener in early modern Europe. What today would be called landscape design – as opposed to the brute work of rooting about the soil itself, trenching and planting according to the garden master's grand plan – was in the 17th century an occupation of considerable prestige. And so, as Wybe Kuitert (2013) explains, was the literary discourse that sprung up around it. Kuitert's research demonstrates how, in the 17th century, “in the Netherlands... the discourse on gardening became an intellectual's pastime at the level of writing poetry,” while “in England, it evolved into a genteel, at times political, field for proposing elevated statements, sometimes quite pompous or full of scathing understatement addressed at literary or other adversaries” (170). Consequently, acclaimed gardeners, and gardening discoursers, like Temple, found themselves granted a sort of celebrity amongst the lettered. Their ability to apply their knowledge of plant growth and the seasons to bend raw nature to meet prevailing human aesthetics was treated as an enormous, and gentlemanly, accomplishment. And this, not despite, but because of nature's immensity and unfathomability, Temple at least took as

license for a certain level of philosophical speculation upon mankind's role in the greater scheme of nature. Certainly, Temple writes with the breezy authority of a man who expects to be taken seriously – and taken seriously he was, not just as a diplomat, but as a public intellectual (Blue, 64-65). And it is worth taking him seriously still. Especially, I propose, as a counterpoint to Nieuhof, whose enthusiastic embrace of the burgeoning field of “natural philosophy” structures and permeates his travelogue. Temple's notably divergent strain of thought on this same topic, and also his views on China and travel generally, we shall presently explore, by consideration of, as they become pertinent, three of Temple's best known and most influential works: “Upon the Gardens of Epicurus,” “An Essay upon Ancient and Modern Learning,” and “Of Heroic Virtue.”

From the first paragraph of “Upon the Gardens of Epicurus” (quoted above) Temple presents man's relationship to nature as fraught and essentially “disappointing.” Born with a self-awareness that separates him from the rest of the denizens of earth, humanity alone enjoys the exquisite pain of reflection. His “faculty of reason” curses him with a refinement of “passions... wants and desires” whose complicated delicacy makes satisfaction difficult at best. No comparable nonhuman experience exists. Thus does Temple establish nature from the get-go as an imposing archetype – tall and forbidding – looming inscrutably over a humanity that it seems neither to cherish nor favour, but whose fate it administers.

This is no exaggeration. Humanity, Temple explains, began simply: men “lived by the hour, or by the day, and satisfied their appetite with what they could get from the herbs, the fruits, the springs they met when they were hungry or dry” (4). From these vegetal origins, man learned to cull from the animal realm; and after chancing to come upon more than was immediately needed, learned to set aside his extra, so inventing the concept of wealth. “From such small beginnings,” Temple laments, “have grown such vast and extravagant designs of poor mortal men” (5). Temple attributes to these natural and yet somehow fundamentally faulty origins the rises and subsequent inevitable falls of the “Assyrian kings... Caliphs of Egypt” and even “the latter part of the lives of Scipio, Lucullus, Augustus, Diocletian.” This ambivalence towards nature is in fact one of the hallmarks of Temple's thought. He remarks tartly of the study of nature that: “I know no advantage mankind has gained by the progress of natural philosophy during so many ages it has had vogue in the world, excepting always, and very justly, what we owe to mathematics.” Mathematics he sets aside as both the apparent source of “all that seems valuable among the civilized nations,” and further, as that study which seems to divide the elite nations from “those we call barbarous.” (9). Temple's comments overall give an indication that the

mathematical representation of transcendent natural laws so taken for granted today – particularly in studies like physics and chemistry – was not yet a commonplace, or was at least still at a nascent level of development. Given the early state of scientific endeavour in the mid-17th century, perhaps Temple can be forgiven this.[37] But his tirade is fascinating because from this point, just where it might be expected to end, it in fact only gathers steam.

The lot of man

"How ancient this natural philosophy has been in the world is hard to know" (9-10), Temple writes in "Upon the Gardens." King Solomon he conjectures as the first to "[find] out the vanity" (10) of natural law – "of which discovery he has left such admirable strains in Ecclesiastes." For Temple, Solomon's virtue lies in how his study of "the book of nature" leads him to the moral precepts that make up Ecclesiastes – a book which, for all its meanderings, concludes decisively on the pre-eminent importance of humankind's need to prostrate itself before an ultimately unknowable and all-powerful God. Just the opposite of the disposition of scientism towards the nonhuman world. It is the fundamental premise of scientific endeavour, after all, that nature *can* be known, and from its study the transcendent laws that govern its actions discovered. But for Temple, the viability of this premise is yet undecided. In "On Ancient and Modern Learning," he makes his position clearer:

> There is nothing new in Astronomy to vye with the Ancients, unless it be the Copernican System; nor in Physick, unless Hervey's Circulation of the blood. But whether either of these be modern discoveries, or derived from old Fountains, is disputed: Nay, it is so, too, whether they are true (25).

And if they are true, Temple adds, they have "made no change in the conclusions" of either field (25-26). This scepticism towards science's potential to meaningfully advance human knowledge of the world, in as well lettered and respected a contemporary of Nieuhof's as Temple, rather dramatically throws Nieuhof's quite different stance into relief.

The foundation for Temple's scepticism of science seems to be largely two-fold. On the one hand, he doubts the human capacity to press (at any rate quickly) beyond the

37. Although, then again, perhaps not: C.B. Macpherson, in "William Temple, Political Scientist?," an essay meant to shore up the evidence for Temple's amenability to inductive reasoning, states flatly that Temple "ignored whole tracts of contemporary scientific activity" (42).

boundaries of natural philosophy as they stood during his day – without, that is, the sacrifice of other forms of knowledge. And secondly, comprising the most idiosyncratic aspect of his critique, Temple believes that what must be traded away to allow for greater knowledge of nature is ultimately far more important than anything science could ever provide in recompense. Regarding this first of these points, Temple speaks in his “On Ancient and Modern Learning” of the “little grain of Intellect or Good Sense” that men “bring with them into the World” at birth, and which “may be improved or impaired in some degree by accidents of Education, of Study, and of Conversation or Business,” but yet “cannot go beyond the reach of its Native Force, no more than Life can beyond the period to which it was destined by the strength or weakness of the seminal Vertue” (18). This idea is not in the end so controversial: it is taken for granted today that differing genetic possibilities – the modern iteration of Temple's “seminal Vertue” – are variously gifted to humans at birth, and that these potentialities environment then acts upon to develop or not. But Temple is unusual in finally concluding that it is possible that the study of ancient knowledge may *hinder* the natural inventiveness of gifted men (18).[38]

The value of natural philosophy

And this is perhaps the most interesting of Temple's critiques of natural philosophy – certainly, it is the most surprising. Temple asserts that the study of natural philosophy is detrimental to humanity because it distracts men from the superior study of moral philosophy. Returning to “Upon the Gardens,” we find Temple summarizing of Solomon, Socrates, and Marcus Antoninus that:

> And indeed, whoever reads with thought what... [these men] have said upon the vanity of all that mortal man can ever attain to know of nature, in its originals or operations, may save himself a great deal of pains, and justly conclude, that the knowledge of such things is not in our game; and (like the pursuit of a stag by a little spaniel) may serve to amuse and to weary us, but will never be hunted

38. Although he does not discuss Temple specifically, Earl Wasserman's “Nature Moralized: The Divine Analogy in the Eighteenth Century” (1953) is a useful reference here. In it, Wasserman traces the rise and fall of the “universal analogy” – by which moral laws can be deduced from the study of God's physical world – in 18th century thought. Wasserman at one point quotes George Turnbull: "...tho' natural philosophy be commonly distinguished from the moral; all the conclusions in natural philosophy, concerning the order, beauty, and perfection of the material world, belong properly to moral philosophy... In reality, when natural philosophy is carried so far as to reduce phenomena to good general laws, it becomes moral philosophy" (51). Writing in the early mid-18th century, a generation after Temple's death, Turnbull seems to reconcile moral and natural philosophy in a way that does not yet give up God's (holy) ghost; his view of the double-sidedness of natural and moral philosophy is a fascinating contrast to Temple's dichotomous view.

> down. Yet I think those three I have named, may justly pass for the wisest triumvirate that are left us upon the records of story or of time. (10)

There is a lot to parse in this comment. Most broadly, of course, it (almost superfluously) supports our previous claim that Temple was no friend to the field of natural philosophy, which knowledge he believes is simply “out of our game” as human beings. But it is Temple's way of characterizing this argument that makes his thought a useful contrast to scientism. Large, elusive, and elegant, nature's “originals or operations” are a stag that easily outbounds the “little spaniel” of mankind's intellect. Note here how Temple does not figuratively remove humanity from the natural realm, but casts us instead as a lesser member of its cohort; a tiny, jumping thing, which can find amusement and weariness in pursuit of the understanding of nature, but never at last succeed in the catch. Framing his argument in zoomorphic terms, Temple asserts a transcendent natural hierarchy even as he denies humanity's ability to decipher its nuances. We should hear certain echoes of Christian theology in this, surely, especially following the explicit mention of King Solomon and Ecclesiastes. The acceptance of human limitation in the face of an unimaginably great and complex higher power is, as before mentioned, a distinctly ecclesiastical theme. But it is noteworthy that Temple doesn't pin his metaphor to any overtly theological argument, nor does he here set humanity aside from the rest of nature as its divinely appointed steward. The balance of power Temple portrays between nature and humanity in no way favours the latter term.

Temple continues on to make a canvass of philosophy's great names, explaining in detail how “all the different schemes of nature that have been drawn of old, or of late, by Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, Descartes, or Hobbes, or any other that I know of...” converge finally in their futility, “and seem more or less probable one than another, according to the wit and eloquence of the authors and advocates that raise or defend them” (11). All of these different conceptions of nature are just “rover shots, some nearer and some further off, but all at a great distance from the mark; it may be, none in sight” (11-12). Natural philosophy, institutionalized science's direct European precursor, was for Temple a field that promised objective and concrete truths, but provided only rhetoric. His grasp of the discursive nature of “truth” remains admirable today, even if we fault him for his unfamiliarity with or low opinion of scientific inquiry. It is useful to recall here Macpherson, whose full quote, noted in part above, runs: “while Temple ignored whole tracts of contemporary scientific activity and did not appreciate the nature of some of the outstanding discoveries of his day, he was at least not hostile to the inductive method

which was the essence of the new science" (42).[39] And that much is indeed true; but it is also true that Temple's thought processes and his opinions of this "new science" were not nearly sympathetic enough to portray him as a scientist himself in anything but, perhaps, the broadest sense. Temple himself, unfortunately, doesn't address this latter point in "Upon the Gardens of Epicurus," gracefully shifting topics instead, from the sad state of disagreement amongst philosophy's great men over fundamental natural tenets, to an arena which he finds more agreeable in every sense: moral philosophy.

In Temple's own words:

> Yet in the midst of these and many other disputes and contentions in their natural philosophy, they seem to agree much better in their moral; and upon their inquiries after the ultimate end of man, which was his happiness, their contentions or differences seemed to be rather in words, than in the sense of their opinions, or in the true meaning of their several authors or masters of their sects: all concluded that happiness was the chief good, and ought to be the ultimate end of man; that as this was the end of wisdom, so wisdom was the way to happiness. The question then was, in what this happiness consisted? (12)

Working backwards from this gracefully limned big picture, Temple proceeds to consider the differences in how his various great men have answered the question of "in what happiness consists." But for our current purpose, what stands out here is Temple's sharp distinction between the usefulness of moral as opposed to natural philosophy. He addresses the latter only to list its faults; the former he discusses at length, to uncover, for example, the hidden sympathies between Stoic and Epicurean thought. The first make the "pleasure of virtue" man's greatest happiness, whereas the second make "the greatest pleasure to consist in virtue," with Temple concluding that "the difference between these two seems not easily discovered" (12). And during his subsequent gloss of these superficially opposed sects, Temple lets slip a small phrase that, as it turns out, is essential to understanding his approach to the natural world. Temple admires that, at their

39. Macpherson continues: "[W]hen he was contemptuous of modern scientific experiments and projects it was because he believed they were not useful" (43). Unfortunately, and as Macpherson himself amply documents, Temple so frequently and thoroughly did not think "modern scientific experiments and projects" were useful that Macpherson, in light of his subject's own words, is constantly put to pains qualifying his assessment of Temple as possessing "the attitude of the scientists" even just as a political thinker (44). This scrupulousness is honourable, but Macpherson only succeeds in demonstrating Temple's method as being, as he puts it, "indolent inductive" (46) – which is to say that, even in political matters, at his most inductive, Temple was an inconsistent proto-political scientist whose evidence was "very loosely handled and not subjected to any critical scrutiny of historical evidence." Ultimately, and despite his claim that some of Temple's theories "appear to be reached inductively from analysis of a wide range of relevant material," Macpherson's case seems overblown (40).

best, both the Stoics and Epicureans “neither... dispute life with the fears of death, nor death with the desires of life; but in both, and in all things else... follow nature” (13). Mastery of nature is not Temple's ideal; nor is the penetration of its deepest mysteries – where this does not lead to practical application – his goal. They are wastes of time. The virtue of the ancient philosophers, rather, lies in the extent to which they common sensically advocated working with and not against natural rhythms and impulses.

The superiority of moral philosophy

But this assertion again begs the question of just how Temple intends his audience to respond to his ambivalent concept of “nature” – which term we have now seem him use to refer both to the savagery of humankind's original conditions, and, approvingly, as the basis of classical philosophy's flowering. Kuitert too notes an ambivalence in Temple's conception of nature, even at the level of his garden aesthetics, explaining that Temple “struggled with the reconciliation of irregularity and prescribed Vitruvian geometrics in garden design” (169). Kuitert then quotes a particularly vague passage out of “Upon the Gardens of Epicurus” in which Temple, having praised gardens of “regular” form, proceeds to make the qualification that, “there may be other Forms, wholly irregular, that may, for ought I know, have more Beauty than any of the others” (169). Temple argues that out of “many disagreeing parts” a yet harmonious, “agreeable” whole may be, by nature or human art, sometimes formed. Kuitert uses this quote, as Temple himself does, as the starting point for explicating Temple's concept of *sharawadgi*, which he describes as a Chinese-derived aesthetic concept founded on the appreciation of balanced asymmetry. The finer points of the sharawadgi aesthetic aside, Kuitert's example helps demonstrate that in several dimensions of his thought on the natural world, Temple grappled with an ambivalence that he eventually, if not always clearly, reconciled.

The key to deciphering his apparently self-contradictory views of nature at the philosophical level – and indeed, to better understanding even his garden aesthetics – comes in Temple's essay “Of Heroic Virtue,” which sees Temple take temporary leave of his beloved Occidental philosophers to try his luck in the East. “Section II” of the essay treats exclusively of China. In it, he writes approvingly of the most ancient of China's heroes, Fuho, that he “reduced [the pre-historical Chinese] from the common original lives of mankind, introduced agriculture, wedlock, distinction of sexes by different habits, laws, orders of government,” and also invented the first Chinese writing system (321-322). His

use of the word “reduce” here is unexpected and idiosyncratic. Its generally negative valence jars against the context in which he has used it. Is this simple carelessness? Surely not – Temple was too masterful a writer. Rather, his usage superficially suggests that mankind's evolution from the “common original” state of pre-civilization towards gentler living was, at least for the Chinese – and despite Temple's subsequent list of the varied and virtuous inventions Fohu gifted upon the Chinese – an exchange. Physis for Nomos. Humanity, it seems, only became a spaniel nipping at the heels of Nature by trading away its original wolfishness. But by giving up the “original life” granted by nature, humanity was able to move past savagery to the order of civilization. Here, for perhaps the first time, do we find a conceit in Temple's thought reminiscent of scientism's dichotomization of human and nature. But whereas scientism predicates its conceptual divide on the latent human capacity to understand and consequently control the nonhuman natural world, Temple seems to predicate his on the impossibility of civilized order developing in a wholly natural context – that is, he *seems* to.

But what then do we make of Temple's enthusiastic paraphrase of Confucius' teachings that the sage's “chief principle” was that “every man ought to study and endeavour the improving and perfecting of his own natural reason to the greatest height he is capable, so as he may never (or as seldom as can be) err and swerve from the law of nature” (323-324)? How can the nature whose savagery humankind needed to leave behind be the same nature whose “law” determined the course of a best-lived life amongst Epicureans, Stoics, and Confucians alike? To use a delightfully appropriate metaphor for a gardener-philosophe: it is a matter of growth. It is not that humanity's earliest conditions were inherently deplorable – but to have remained in such a state would have been. Frank Herriot's archaic but still insightful essay on Temple's political thought too emphasizes this tendency:

> [Temple] grasps clearly the fundamental idea that underlies all law and institutions, namely, that they are a growth, an evolution. Modern society and government arose, he tells us, not from any self-conscious act or determination but as the result of an unconscious bending to conditions and surroundings. Its structural formation is moulded, modified, and directed by circumstances, by situation, by climate, by innumerable minute but character-shaping forces. He discerns... the subtle but powerful influence of soil, scenery, physical environment, of food stuffs even, upon the physical, intellectual and moral energies and character of a people. (33)

Herriot's reading stresses Temple's placement of human civilization onto a spectrum

alongside humanity's “natural state.” Civilization, that is, is everywhere in the world and in all its local forms the regional expression of a universal and natural human impetus. Or in other words, “The State is the embodiment in law and the mechanism of administration of the social, gregarious instincts of men” (43) as fitted to a specific environment. It is to this end that Temple theorises the beginning of religion, in “Of Heroic Virtue,” as stemming from the post-mortem deification of the first great men. Those men “who were the first inventors of arts generally received and applauded as most necessary or useful to human life,” and specifically those who introduced “civil government.” We shall return to this quote, but for the moment it is worth noting that these men, in the context of Temple's conception of the non-dichotomous relationship between nature and civilization, were great not for saving humanity from nature, but exactly for embodying the impulse towards civilization with which nature had *imbued* humanity. So doing, they were able to usher humankind from “savage and brutish lives to the safety and convenience of societies, the enjoyment of property, the observance of orders, and the obedience of laws; which were followed by security, plenty, civility, riches, industry, and all kinds of arts” (Of Heroic Virtue, 306). Growth, improvement, the pursuit of (specifically moral and civic) perfection: cultivation is the lot of man. His greatest gift, his greatest burden, and his natural legacy. This explains both Temple's inconsistent characterizations of nature, and his superficially incompatible claims that it is both in man's best interest to follow “the law of nature” but yet a waste of time to study natural philosophy. The study of natural philosophy, for Temple, is often superfluous because it does not actually cultivate in humanity humanity's greatest gift – the potential for a virtuous civic life. Rather, study of the laws that govern mere matter is only justifiable to the extent that its fruits prove “necessary or useful to human life.” But these will always be subordinate to the study of morality, which alone directly refines that moral sense, or at least impulse towards morality, that has been granted humanity alone of creation.

Maryanne Cline Horowitz (1974) might describe this impulse, which Temple terms the “little grain of Intellect or Good Sense” that all men are born with, as man's “seminal reason.” In her discussion of the primary motifs of Stoic thought, Horowitz unpacks what she calls the “unit-idea” of the seed, and its relation to “seminal reason” and “seminal virtue” (the latter of which terms Temple uses himself):

> An important development in the concept of seminal reason is its use in explaining how man can become virtuous. *Logos* means the reason of the

> universe, the law by which things occur. A man seeking to be virtuous must conform himself to this law. How does man come to know this law? We have already seen that man's reason contains natural law within it, and that the common notions in man's reason teach the virtues of goodness, justice, and wisdom. Reason, in the universe and in man, is also called "seminal reason." From the concept *spermatikos logos* comes the concept *semina virtutis*, seeds of virtue existing in man, and the phrase *semina scientiae*, seeds of knowledge. This phrase, in both its versions, is scattered throughout Stoic writing. A Greek fragment states: 'By nature, we are all born with the seeds of virtue.... We must develop them with learning of virtue.' Within man is the potentiality for virtue, a potentiality that must be developed in learning. (12)

Horowitz' painstaking explication of Stoic thought, although not addressed to Temple or his writings, illuminates them beautifully. The *spermatikos logos* is the natural law that not only orders the universe, but lives in men's souls as the “little grain of Intellect or Good Sense” in Temple's “On Ancient and Modern Learning.” In “Of Heroic Virtue,” he deems it “natural reason”; in both cases, he refers to a human potential for reason that makes possible, when it is properly cultivated, a civilized and virtuous life. And it is just such cultivation that Temple finds in the best teachings of all of the Epicureans, Stoics, and Confucians.

But further, this understanding of the divine origin and natural latency of reason helps us to better understand Temple's theorisation of the rise of society in “Of Heroic Virtue.” As Horowitz describes the Stoic world-view: **“**Containing within himself a part of God, man contains within himself the law of nature, for God is the law of nature. Man thus has direct access to natural law, which contains the precepts of moral behaviour” (15). This assertion certainly seems consonant with Temple's aforementioned valorisation of the “convenience of societies, the enjoyment of property, the observance of orders, and the obedience of laws,” which he tacitly endorses by noting that these are the prerequisites to “security, plenty, civility, riches, industry, and all kinds of arts” (306). All things which, just a page later, Temple describes as arising from the “virtues” of great men (Of Heroic Virtue, 307). Note that comprehensive understanding of the workings of nature seems, by modern standards, conspicuously absent from the list. And while Herriot asserts that the development of civilization in humankind is given as an “unconscious” process in Temple's thought, in “Of Heroic Virtue” Temple in fact strongly implies that this process is the result of deliberate action taken by heroic men. Men whose ability to implement the lasting institutions that constitute human society implies not that they are different in kind from other men, but different in quality; different for having manifested the *spermatikos logos* – a virtue that yet slumbers in, but is not absent from, their fellows.

And if this reading of Temple's commentary on the primacy of moral versus natural

philosophy – with moral philosophy understood as the proper, even teleological end of the development of natural reason – does not immediately appear to relate to his idea of sharawadgi, it is telling that in describing that aesthetic Temple gives the following anecdote: “The Chineses scorn [European-like, uniform] Planting, and say a Boy that can tell an hundred, may plant Walks of Trees in strait Lines,” (Kuitert, 169). The Chinese, that is, consider the geometrical regularity characteristic of European garden design an immature aesthetic, masterable even by children; an opinion with which Temple's glowing description of sharawadgi seems to agree.[40] Temple's rhetoric here again stresses the importance of cultivation, of growth: if simple, rigid regularity is the province of children, then moving past it towards the sophistication of sharawadgi is the task of the cultured adult. Or as Kuitert puts it: “For Temple, liking or disliking the irregular was a faculty of discerning, it was a judgement, which brings it to the level of intellectual, literary discourse” (169). Sharawadgi is the aesthetic of the properly civilized man. And so, putting his money where his mouth is, Temple himself takes up the task of elucidating and disseminating sharawadgi in the West, both literarily and in his landscape designs. Designs whose break from the strict geometry of earlier British garden forms imply the incorporation of a sense of conceptual progress into his aesthetic – the enactment, in the aesthetic sphere, of the cultivation of *spermatikos logos.* But even besides their convergence on the principle of cultivation, that Temple's aesthetics and his general moral philosophy can be read as mirroring one another is underscored by the fact that he finds the highest contemporary expressions of both, as we have seen, in China.

Reconciling Temple's natures

So the “nature” that underlies both Temple's aesthetics and his more general understanding of humanity's place in the larger world, it turns out, is more coherent and more consistent than it at first seems. Its overriding principal is the progression from immature simplicity (figured in different contexts as both regular geometric garden design, and the barbarous state of pre-civilized humanity) towards cultured sophistication (the delicate irregularity of sharawadgi; the refinements, comforts, and moral achievements of

40. Surprisingly, Houckgeest – whose observation on this point is striking exactly because it is not a regular topic of his – seems, a century after Temple, to confirm this dichotomy. He writes of Chinese garden aesthetics that “[e]verything is disposed according to a system in which art seems to hide herself in the midst of the irregularities of nature... [which] compose a scene that seems due to chance alone” (vol. II, 138). Houckgeest finds no strict geometries in a Chinese garden, and to him it is a novel “system” of “art.”

civilization). Placed into the company of Nieuhof, Macartney, and Houckgeest, Temple instantly stands out for conceiving of a nature that is not scientistically inflected. In fact, it is this distinct *lack* of scientistic inflection that characterises the tone of Temple's actual gardening advice, once he very eventually gets around to it in “Upon the Gardens of Epicurus.”

He does not rush to do so. First, Temple must skip down several other tangents: who designed Western history's first recorded gardens, and for what reason, and where, and what the differences amongst these were. Then there are many lectures to give on the fruits and flowers that records suggest were being kept in these ancient gardens. But notably absent in all this is any scientistic obsession with quantification. Lists of species are given, yes, but they are less genuinely taxonomical than, say, Nieuhof's notes on Chinese flora. Where Nieuhof aims at adding to Western knowledge by the creation of a comprehensive document of Chinese species, Temple's essay focuses on addressing the particular species listed in various pre-existing horticultural *documents*. That is, Temple's specimens are presented in the context of the histories of their discovery and cultivation; they are a scholarly response to a Western tradition of gardening literature, rather than a systematic accounting of botanical life per se.[41] This approach sets Temple's essay quite apart from the botanical assays of Nieuhof or Macartney. But ultimately, the actual horticultural histories and advice in “Upon the Gardens of Epicurus” are less germane to my argument than the overarching dichotomization of moral and natural philosophy that characterises them. What was explicit in Temple's discussion of moral philosophy is present here, stylistically, in his horticultural historiography. This, if nothing else, at least demonstrates that the scientism that characterises Nieuhof's *An Embassy from the East India Company* was in no wise the only or even dominant line of contemporary thinking on that field, natural philosophy, that as it grew in esteem and institutional clout, would come to play such an important role in shaping Western European conceptions of China.

The value of travel

But before moving to Temple's own conceptions of China, it is worth mentioning one other area, aside from natural philosophy, where Temple markedly departs from Nieuhoffian views. In “On Ancient and Modern Learning,” Temple addresses the topic of

41. See for instance his detailed discussion of the “Mala Aurea,” which Temple explains was commonly taken in the writings of Virgil to refer to oranges; Temple disagrees with this interpretation (30-31).

travel as a mode of learning. A starker contrast to Nieuhof – whose enthusiastic advocacy of the benefits that world travel has made to human knowledge we have already seen him posit as the premier justification for his *own* travelogue – can hardly be imagined. Temple, writing from a pointedly Western European vantage, quips that improvements to the science of navigation have:

> [I]ntroduced into our Acquaintance... great Increases of Wealth and Luxury, but none of Knowledge... further than the Extent and scituation of Country, the customs and manners of so many original Nations, which we call Barbarous, and I am sure have treated them as if we hardly esteem them to be a part of Mankind. (28)

If Temple's defence of the common humanity of Europeans and so many "Nations, which we call Barbarous," is unexpected, striking the modern reader as progressive, his minimization of the non-economic effects of travel upon Europe seems hopelessly outdated. It seems quixotic, even, predicated as it is upon his romanticisation of Ancient Greece and Rome. With pompous certainty, Temple avers that, living as they did in an age "when Knowledge and Fame were in as great Request as endless Gains and Wealth are among us now," the ancient Greeks and Romans would have drawn from these same exotic lands such superior wisdom that it is literally unimaginable anymore (28). Setting aside the unfalsifiability of Temple's claim – which boils down, really, to an indictment of the materialism of his own age – what we are left with is a clear example of an attitude towards travel that direct opposes Nieuhof's.

The Chinese challenge to Biblical chronology – and speaking of China...

Temple was also quite familiar with the predominantly Jesuit body of European writings on China extent in his day, and with the controversies that abounded in early Sinological discourse. He gives, for example, a history of missionary presence in China in "On Heroic Virtue":

> Since [Marco Polo's] time, and within two or three hundred years, several missionary friers and jesuits have, upon devotion or command of their superiors, pierced with infinite pains and dangers through these vast and savage regions... and arrived at Peking. (314)

And yet, centuries of European surveillance of Chinese history span only a comparative

moment of its length. Temple is certain that Chinese records go back at least 4000 years, to the time of the aforementioned Fuho, observing that “the progress [of the Chinese' historical records] has ever since continued so clear, that they are esteemed by the missionary jesuits unquestionable and infallible” (On Heroic Virtue, 321). In “On Ancient and Modern Learning,” he elaborates this point, touching upon one of the most important ramifications of China's record-keeping:

> [I]t may be asserted with great Evidence that, though we know little of the Antiquities of India beyond Alexander's time, yet those of China are the oldest that any where pretend to any fair Records: For these are agreed by the Missionary Jesuits to extend so far above Four Thousand Years, and with such Appearance of clear and undeniable Testimonies, that those Religious Men themselves, rather than question their Truth by finding them contrary to the vulgar Chronology of the Scripture, are content to have recourse to that of the Septuagint, and thereby salve the Appearances in those Records of the Chineses. (12-13)

The challenge that the Chinese people's extensive native histories posed to Biblical chronology has been discussed closely by Blue, who provides useful context here. Blue introduces the topic in his “China and western social thought in the modern period” by quoting Edward Van Kley's famous assertion from “Europe's 'Discovery' of China, and the writing of world history” (1971) that “'perhaps the most serious challenge to the traditional scheme of world history and the factor most instrumental in changing that scheme was the discovery of ancient Chinese history.'” Blue goes on to describe how, in 1659, “one year after publication of the Jesuit Martini's *Decas sinicae historiae,* the Dutch Historian Isaac Vossius used that work to argue that the Chinese historical annals were superior to the Biblical chronology and that the flood of Noah had not been universal” (62-63).[42] The dates in these lengthy annals were often enough corroborated by verifiable astronomical observations that Christian authors could not dismiss them out of hand (63). And as Temple notes, the complications they introduced to Biblical chronology forced these authors to “have recourse” to the Septuagint in their attempts to reconcile Biblical with Chinese history. None of these attempted reconciliations found unanimous approval, however, and debates surrounding Chinese history's challenge to Biblical chronology raged until well into the 18th century (Blue, 63). Outlining three major trends that ramified from these debates, Blue explains:

42. See also Van Kley, “Europe's Discovery of China...” (359-360).

> The first was an increasingly critical, de-sacralizing attitude towards historical sources, whether Biblical or Chinese. The second was a skeptical readiness to treat the fabulous as myth. A third trend, one that came to mark the entire early Enlightenment, was a relativization of Western historical experience and in particular an acceptance of the restricted validity of Judeo-Christian culture. (63)

The effect of Chinese record keeping upon not just Western Biblical chronology, but Western attitudes towards the accuracy of its own histories cannot be underestimated. Temple demonstrates that this challenge had already registered in the mid-17th century; its ramifications were beginning to snowball. And a century later, as Van Kley asserts:

> A mid-eighteenth-century historian might question or reject parts of ancient Chinese history and chronology; he might doubt the virtues and wonders of Chinese civilization described by the Jesuits; but it had become exceedingly difficult for him to ignore Chinese history. And for many writers the inclusion of ancient Chinese history had seriously altered the traditional conceptions of universal history. (“Europe's 'Discovery' of China,” 385)

Perhaps after all there is reason to challenge Kitson's claim that the Macartney debacle would become Britain's defining Chinese trauma. Centuries before, China, with its long scholarly tradition and government of literati that had produced annals so reliable that they could threaten even the authority of the bible, had already struck a telling blow to Eurocentric dreams of Christian infallibility. Not to say that it toppled them; but to properly contextualise the appeal of scientism's tacit promise of control-through-comprehension – and that, after all, is what I posit as scientism's fundamental appeal to Nieuhof, Houckgeest, and Macartney – it is important to recall the significant anxieties that the longevity of Chinese culture posed to Western European thinkers in the premodern era.

Which brings us back to Temple. For in the face of these anxieties, Temple does not seek, like Nieuhof, to quantify, and so imaginatively contain, China. Even the measurements of China's various dimensions given in “Of Heroic Virtue” are generally contextualised within the history of Jesuit efforts to explore the vast country, and qualified when he is uncertain of their precision. And even then, his discussion of China is given within a larger work that similarly treats several other nations. Typical of his approach is Temple's final paragraph on China's extent:

> Whatever length it has, which by none is esteemed less than twelve or thirteen hundred miles, it must be allowed to be the greatest, richest, and most populous kingdom now known in the world; and will perhaps be found to owe its riches, force, civility, and felicity, to the admirable constitution of its government,

more than any other. (319)

China's “admirable” government – and the morality-focused tradition of learning from which it originated – Temple later treats in much greater detail than he anywhere does its size or geographical particulars. Temple is more invested in Chinese culture – for instance, tracing the contours of Confucian thought – than systematically reducing China to a series of neat units as our other diplomats do. On the contrary, for Temple, it is China's example against which all other cultures should be measured; it is irreducible to European terms because they are too crude by comparison to contain it. Blue too notes this impulse in Temple, calling him bluntly “probably the greatest of the English Sinophiles” (64), before quoting the diplomat's famous assertion, also from “On Heroic Virtue,” of the clear superiority of Chinese government to “all those imaginary schemes of the European wits, the institutions of Xenophon, the republic of Plato, the Utopias, or Oceanas, of our modern writers” (Qtd. In Blue, 64).

Even by today's standards – when effort is more routinely made not to portray the “rise of Western civilization” as a global inevitability – this blatant valorisation of Chinese over Western governmental designs seems bold in a Western writer. Temple fleshes out his logic in “On Ancient and Modern Learning,” where he makes the following interesting argument for the effect of climate upon cultural development:

> Besides, I know no Circumstances like to Contribute more to the advancement of Knowledge and Learning among men than exact Temperance in their Races, great pureness of Air, and equality of Clymate, long Tranquility of Empire or Government: And all these we may justly allow to those Eastern Regions more than any others we are acquainted with, at least till the Conquests made by the Tartars upon both India and China in the later Centuries (15).

This quote is important on two counts. First, it supports the notion of Temple as man of cosmopolitan mind, who held China (and India) in high regard, not because of any stock he had put into fabulous tall tales, but from an apparent familiarity with their histories. But it also, incidentally, showcases Temple's conceptualization of nature in significantly larger-than-garden-sized terms. Temple here portrays mankind as dependent upon and delimited by its natural environment: man cannot thrive where the material conditions for civilization are not optimal. Compare this with the scientistic conceit that a civilization's sophistication is best measured by how well it can understand and manipulate its material context, and suddenly the stark difference between Temple's and Nieuhof's most primal ideological

disposition towards the nonhuman world comes sharply into focus. China-the-empire is a model and paragon to Temple because of how it has learned to capitalize on China-the-land's gifts: blessed with “pureness of Air, and equality of Clymate,” China-the-land does not require that the Chinese constantly battle against the elements merely to survive.[43] Liberated in this way, the Chinese have sensibly chosen to pursue moral questions instead – to take up, essentially, the cultivation of their “little grains” as a pan-cultural practice. A method which, for Temple, means refraining from impractical investigations into Natural Whys. Two pages earlier in his essay, he has already made this latter point resoundingly, admiring that “...near the Age of Socrates lived their Great and Renowned Confutius, who began with the same design of reclaiming men from the useless and endless Speculations of Nature to those of Morality” (13).

Temple as foil: the Anti-hof

Extracts like these, in which Temple valorises Chinese culture, or minimizes “Speculations of Nature” – and occasionally, as here, both at the same time – well show how Temple makes an ideal foil to Nieuhof. Temple, in fact, helps us to place Nieuhof into a lineage of ideas that culminates in the profoundly scientistic views of Houckgeest and, even more so, Macartney. Indeed, juxtaposing Temple and Nieuhof helps to define the very boundaries of this lineage. Across the considerable breadth of his letters, from the history of Western gardening to the legacy of Confucius, time and again Temple underscores the futility of natural philosophy in relation to the immediate and practical import of moral philosophy; providing evidence in so doing that scientistically inflected approaches to non-Western peoples were not, at least in his day, a foregone conclusion.

Chapter Four: Lord George's Adventures in Blunderland

43. It is worth noting that Temple's effusive praise of the Chinese does not – quite – rise to the level of romanticization. He notes, for instance, a tendency towards a general cultural “effeminacy” brought about by “great ease, plenty, and luxury” (333), and gives this as the cause of the Tartars having successfully invaded “three several” times. He is also comparatively scathing about Chinese religion, and on this topic almost attains actual condemnation: “The great idea which may be conceived of the Chinese wisdom and knowledge, as well as their wit, ingenuity, and civility, by all we either see or read of them, is apt to be lessened by their gross and sottish idolatry; but this itself is only amongst the vulgar or illiterate... But the learned adore the spirit of the world” (334-335). This is still a very tepid critique overall, and smacks more of classism than anything else, but is nonetheless worth noting as an example in Temple of ambivalence towards the Chinese.

So far, I have close-read examples of scientistic ideology in Johan Nieuhof"s travelogue *An Embassy from the East India Company*, as Nieuhof expresses this in his choice of Chinese subjects, ways of describing them, and even by certain formal qualities of his travelogue. Then I compared his travelogue with several of the works of Sir William Temple, who also addresses such topics as China and the general status of natural philosophy – but to very different, decidedly non-scientistic ends – and by this was able to further throw Nieuhof's scientism into relief. I will now continue with close reading, by looking for a continuation of Nieuhoffian patterns in the theme and style of Lord George Macartney's *An Embassy to China*. As I eventually shall also with Houckgeest, I will here pursue evidence that the similarities between our primary texts point towards a shared, distinctly European, distinctly scientistic ideological ground – one which seems notably self-conscious and self-referential in Macartney and Houckgeest.

But then, this self-consciousness might be expected of book produced during a period which saw science itself developed into its first literal institutions. Europe's original scientific society, after all, sprang up in Macartney's own backyard. King Charles II (possibly to Sir Temple's everlasting dismay) chartered the Royal Society of London in 1662, with the aim of fostering the “Improvement of Natural Knowledge.” Its – and history's – first peer-reviewed scientific journal was published three years after this, in 1665. There's no need to overstress here the Royal Society's symbolic importance as the first institutionalization of the field of natural philosophy, complete even with royal patronage; typically of events viewed in hindsight, its significance is now obvious – and it was only the beginning of what was to come. Between Nieuhof's embassy in 1655 and Macartney's in 1793, scientific ideology and methodology were together established across Western Europe as a bonafide and transnational institution and driving cultural force. This was a time of, as they are inevitably labelled, “scientific breakthroughs,” now recognized as fundamental to the inauguration of various fields of study. There was Anton van Leeuwenhoek's discovery of “animalcules” circa 1675 (which wee beasties later found their first broad audience, incidentally, via the Royal Society's publications); Newton's publication of the *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* in 1687, wherein he laid out his famous laws of motion, and thus the foundation of physic's classical mechanics; Carolus Linnaeus' *Systema Naturae* in 1735, which in subsequent publications would popularize Linnaean taxonomy; Antoine Lavoisier's chemical discoveries in the 1770s and publication in 1787 of *Méthode de Nomenclature Chimique*, which introduced to the

fledgling science of chemistry the sense of organization that Linnaeus had brought to taxonomy – and these are no more than a smattering. Between Nieuhof's era and Macartney's, the brutal efficiency of science as a means of understanding, systematizing, and, in Adorno and Horkheimer's terms, imposing order upon the natural world, became woven into the fabric of European culture.

And these developments comprised more than just a background ambience to Macartney's life. As John Spence notes, Macartney himself ran in extremely well-read and intellectual circles. He was a Royal Society fellow himself, and a member Edmund Burke's famous Club, where he was described by no less than Samuel Johnson as “in some degree a literary man” (Spence, *An Embassy to China*, Introduction, vii) – a phrase that might seem damnation by faint praise coming from anyone else, but Johnson wasn't just anyone else. Notably, Macartney hand-picked Sir George Staunton, his “confidential friend and former secretary” to be the official secretary of his embassy (Barrow, 343). Staunton, who would author the official and first-published account of the embassy's travels in 1799, was also a fellow of the Royal Society – a fact Staunton advertises proudly on the frontispiece of his own travelogue. Several other scientists also made up Macartney's retinue, including a botanist, metallurgist, and mechanist (Berg, 14). And of course, we have already mentioned botanist, bureaucrat, and Royal Society president Sir Joseph Banks' involvement in orchestrating the technological espionage that formed the greatest covert goal of Macartney's embassy. Clingham, in his work on the cultural dissonance between Macartney's embassy and the Qing, writes of Macartney that “[i]n expressing his idea of the 'proper organization of the embassy,' Macartney situates it in the global context of Britain’s late eighteenth-century scientific and cultural exploration” (9). Indeed, in his personal letters, Macartney describes his embassy as directed by his Sovereign explicitly “for the acquisition and diffusion of knowledge” (Clingham, 9). More pointedly, he wrote to Birmingham tradesman Matthew Boulton that he sought:

> [A]n operative tradesman, skilled in metallurgy, who by being in the train of an ambassador might have opportunities of inspecting the Chinese manufactories, foundries etc. and of making such observations as would tend to improve our own & to discover the taste of the people, in order that we might know how best to adapt to it, the different articles in your branch for future exportation to China. (Berg, 14)

These biographical tidbits do not exhaust the evidence of, but are sufficient to prove Macartney's familiarity and engagement with the scientific community of his day. (They

also, of course, make blatant how central technological appropriation was to Macartney's mission.)

Indeed, the clique-ish and intellectual nature of Macartney's social circle illustrates something vital about the premodern period: to the extent that such a thing as a pan-European culture can even be spoken of in the 17th and 18th centuries, it was in great part crafted from the international correspondences and collaborations of Europe's lettered men. As the work of Lisa Jardine has shown, these early scientists were able to transcend even war in the name of discovery, and amongst them, scholarly ideas, in the form of treatises, letters, and books, circulated with near modern speed.[44] By the time of Macartney's embassy at the twilight of the 18th century, the cumulative effect of these myriad discrete assays into various aspects of the natural world – often performed by men with governmental positions or connections, and membership to local scientific societies; that is, men of Macartney's own standing and circle – was a convergence upon the belief in universal scientific laws thought to account for all earthly phenomena.[45] Laws which the scientific method could, and inarguably *should* uncover. And as this goal increasingly united disparate scientific fields, ideologically, under a single institutional umbrella, a scientific discourse of recognizably modern scope and authority arose.

The British empire's standing

This discourse, which finds an early but unmistakeable expression in Nieuhof, albeit in rudimentary form, is even more obvious in the journal of Lord George Macartney, and we shall examine it presently. But there is another great change that we must keep in mind, before shifting our critical gaze from the mid-17th to late 18th century. By the departure of Macartney's embassy in 1793, the economic stakes involved in China's trade with Western Europe had also changed. In fact, the entire hierarchy of Western European powers had changed, and quite dramatically. We may allow Spence to set the stage here:

> Great Britain, despite its recent loss of the American colonies, had a powerful Eastern base in its Indian dominions, while Spanish and Portuguese strength was much reduced from its former glories, and the French and Dutch had seen their commercial power decline in comparison to Britain's. The China trade

44. See Jardin, chs. 10 and 11.

45. Drayton speaks often about individual scientists as imperial agents, but see especially chapters six and seven.

> already totalled close to a million pounds sterling in a year, and Macartney was sure it had huge potentials for expansion. (An Embassy to China, xi)

By the time of Macartney and Houckgeest's embassies, the British had become the most powerful Western empire on earth; the Dutch were still important players on the field, but as Spence says, they were no longer as pre-eminent as they had been in Nieuhof's day.[46] And indeed, the general mood at the start of Macartney's mission reflected British pride in their position at the top of the European imperial food chain. An optimism Berg too notes: Macartney's company was “confident of British technological progress and commercial institutions,” she writes, observing that “Macartney himself wrote in his pocket book for the journey, that the English were ‘at this moment the first people of the world – whenever they are out of their own country...Their generosity, the child of opulence and industry, is unbounded...'” (13).

It goes without saying then that Macartney's embassy, for all its scientism, was officially engaged with and motivated by the imperialist goal of correcting what Macartney's first biographer John Barrow called Britain's “large yearly balances in favor of China” (Barrow, 339). Barrow substantiates Spence:

> [I]t was conceived that if a new market could be opened on the northern part of the coast of that extensive empire, a new and increased demand for [textiles, lead, tin, and various minor sundries], and others not wanted in the southern provinces, might there be created, and thus diminish the inconvenience arising from the difficulty of procuring bullion. (339-340)

Barrow's statement requires little explication, but is reproduced here as a counterweight to my previous emphasis on the scientistic influences upon and premises for Macartney's mission. This study, after all, means to stress that the scientism recorded in Macartney's – and all of our diplomats' – text(s) was always already imbricated within a matrix of other contemporary ideologies. That, in fact, is the point here: the scientism recorded in these texts helped to reinforce the imperialist aims motivating their embassies – which aims, as we have just seen, are also rather well documented.

Macartney's gifts

46. For an in-depth discussion of this topic, see Patrick O'Brien, “Mercantilism and Imperialism in the Rise and Decline of the Dutch and British Economies,1585-1815.”

Indeed, it is at just such an intersection between scientism and British imperialism that one finds the impetus for Macartney's embassy. An embassy that was not, in execution, nearly so grand or sophisticated as Macartney's testimony to the civilizing goals of his mission might have indicated; a fact attested by the embassy's poor choice of gifts to the Qianlong emperor. Kitson describes the intended outcome of the embassy's tactical choice of gifts, as it was envisioned in the happy early days of the mission: “Confronted with the magnificence of British manufactures and scientific progress, it was thought that the Chinese could not help but be impressed” (128). Unfortunately, Macartney's gifts not only famously failed to whet the Chinese appetite for British wares, but hardly provoked any reaction at all – except in the indignant ambassador. To understand why, we may look to Berg's analysis of the embassy's decision to forgo presenting Qianlong with much in the way of practical, day-to-day British manufactures, in favour of gilded automata and other novelties. These latter, significantly, included a certain much-ballyhooed planetarium that had in fact been crafted in Germany, and only decorated in Britain (17). Berg gives a detailed inventory of the gifts:

> The categories of mathematical, scientific and philosophical instruments contained numbers of microscopes, telescopes, thermometers, barometers, a chronometer, apothecaries’ scales, a set of diamond scales, an air pump, a gold watch and various astronomical instruments. The descriptions of these give as much detail to the mahogany, japanned and glass casings with their ornamentation as they do to the instruments. The category of chemical, electrical and philosophic apparatus contained items more immediately relevant to manufacturing technology. This contained chemical apparatus, bottles and stoppers for acids, vitreous acids and sulphuric acid, magnets and magnetic apparatus, portable furnaces, a foundry, fire works, electrical machines and engines, a portable steam engine, a model of a lock, a printing press and various mathematical and optical tools. This scientific apparatus dominated the goods taken on the Embassy. It certainly conveyed the ‘taste for science’ in Europe, but did it convey a close integration of science and technology? (31)

She explains that “[t]he Embassy’s rather disorganized and even cavalier method in going about collecting... [examples of] British manufacture shows little of the aspirations conveyed in the letter of George III for transmitting the ‘arts and comforts of life’ to other parts of the world” (23), later remarking that “[a] German planetarium embellished by a luxury London jeweller and clockmaker, despite its cost and the subsequent difficulties of its packaging, assembly and display, was considered crucial for the Embassy; a steam engine was not” (27). Few images better paint the true relation of scientism to the imperial

goals of the Macartney embassy than the boatload of gaudy orreries and clocks that were meant to convey – to an emperor whose palace was very literally already glutted with them – the distinction of the British race. Mistaking from the outset the Qing's capacity to distinguish gold-plated trifles from such wares as might be widely made use of – ones that, like steam engineering, truly showcased British ingenuity – the embassy had indicated an underestimation of the Chinese that the Chinese did not fail to notice. Berg illustrates the Chinese response to another instance of British condescension with a revealing anecdote:

> The Embassy made claims to the Chinese about the delicacy of the instruments, the length of time it would take to assemble them and the need for their own skilled craftsmen to get them working properly. What happened when the presents were being assembled, however, was that an edict was sent out by the Grand Council to gather 'the most skilful Western Ocean men from the Halls [Churches of the missionaries in Peking] who are versed in astronomy and capable of repairing clocks, and bring them to Jehol.' This and other documents indicate that there was in Peking a class of Western missionaries who could be called on by the Emperor as super craftsmen when needed. The Chinese officials made the point that the Embassy's claims to superior craftsmen were exaggerated: "Now that the tribute Envoy has seen that there are also people in the Celestial Empire who are versed in astronomy, geography and clock-repairing, and are now helping alongside those who are setting up the articles, he can no longer boast that he alone has got the secret. Presumably he has begun to stop boasting." (15-16)

In some ways symbolizing Macartney's mission as a whole, here the Chinese demonstrate their mastery of Western technologies by calling upon their own European court pets, a symbolic exercise of power that Macartney and company, still flabbergasted by the Qing's refusal to bow to their technological superiority, completely fail to register – and an ominous sign of miscommunications to come. To be fair to Macartney, though, and at the risk of jumping ahead, it should be mentioned that Houckgeest's journal betrays a similar line of thinking. He is much less concerned overall with the Chinese reception to his embassy's gifts – which he never details in his journal, referring to them only as "pieces of mechanism" – but he does mention at one point that he thinks it "not at all improbable that these trifles would find a good market here," given how much the "pieces of mechanism" in question amused the emperor (vol. II, 48; vol. I, 199-200). But that is the extent of Houckgeest's speculations; compared to Macartney's obsession with the importance of his gifts for Qianlong, Houckgeest seems strikingly nonchalant.

The journal; Tourane Bay, the Liuchiu Islands

As for Macartney's travelogue itself: J. L. Cranmer-Byng's authoritative 1969 edition of Macartney's journal is the most commonly available print version today. Cranmer-Byng based his edition off of a manuscript that began in possession of Macartney's heirs, but was later sold to a string of private collectors before finally ending up in Tokyo. For the most part, Cranmer-Byng's edition follows the version of the journal published in the second volume of Barrow's 1807 *Some Account of the Public Life, and a Selection from the Unpublished Writings of, The Earl of Macartney*, differing from it mostly with the addition of Qianlong's infamous letter to King George, and copious editorial notes of his own. Cranmer-Byng himself referred to Macartney's journal as “perhaps the most important single Chinese document for the study of Sino-Western relations between 1700 and 1860” (qtd. in Clingham, 1). It is from the 2004 London Folio Society re-edition of Cranmer-Byng that I have made the current exegesis.

Macartney's journal is ordered in a simple, chronological way, without any of Nieuhof's fussy regional lists. And though Clingham, who concedes that “scientific rationality” is “essential” to Macartney's journal, oddly finds that its “temporal exactitude, diplomatic niceties, and empirical realism – are nicely balanced by his openness to the particularities of Chinese culture” (8), I posit that the journal's scientism is not nearly so mild, nor Macartney's ambivalence towards the Chinese so innocuous. The former point, in fact, seems to develop from a distinctly Nieuhoffian precedent. There are several instances, even in its opening pages, at which Macartney's journal immediately recalls Nieuhof. Perhaps most strikingly, Macartney treats his first descriptions of geographical place in a manner that Nieuhof has already made us familiar with. For example, of Tourane Bay, in Cochin China (Da Nang in modern day Vietnam), where he met with “His Cochin Chinese Majesty,” Macartney notes with striking nonchalance: “The place affords a most excellent harbour and there is a spot where a fort might be built and garrisoned at a small expense sufficient to withstand any attempt, against any force likely to be brought against it from any power of this part of the world” (3-4). *Any* attempt, against *any* force, from *any* power of this part of the world. Macartney's superlatives would seem ironically anxious, overdetermined, if it weren't for the breezy brevity of his description overall. He assesses the tactical vulnerability of Tourane Bay in a single breath, without otherwise remarking on its natural features, and then proceeds, again like Nieuhof, to finish his description with a list of its commodities. “[I]t produces excellent cinnamon, common rice and mountain rice in vast abundance and has many rich mines of both gold and silver, one

of the latter at no great distance to Tourane Bay" (4). We have already seen that, in Nieuhof, a conquered landscape is a commodified landscape. In Macartney too this logic holds, for although Cochin China is not a British possession, Macartney's calculations indicate that it *could* be. His description of Tourane Bay is an act of imperial performativity that prepares Tourane Bay for the possibility of later conquest by weighing the value of its natural resources against its vulnerability to both initial conquest and post-conquest retention. The act is conceptual, but in outlining the direction of subsequent imperial action, it makes that action possible – and even if, historically, a British invasion of Tourane Bay was never carried out, nevertheless, Macartney's passage clearly illustrates one route by which scientific ideology can help direct imperial activity.

Such assessment of foreign lands is habitual in Macartney, and later in his journal, in the entry for November the 18th, he makes the same kind of analysis of the Liuchiu Islands (modern Ryukyu Islands). After favourably describing the manner of the Liuchiu ambassadors he has met in Hangchowfu, he jumps headlong – rather with the air of a man relieved to conclude formal pleasantries – into something like a cost-benefit analysis of the Liuchiu as potential trade partners:

> They told me that no European vessel had ever touched their islands, but if they should come they would be well received. There is no prohibition against foreign intercourse; they have a fine harbour capable of admitting the largest vessels not far from their capital, which is considerable in extent and population. They raise a coarse kind of tea, but far inferior to the Chinese, and have many mines of copper and iron. No gold or silver mines have as yet been discovered among them, which may in some measure account for these islands being so little known. (132-133)

To a modern audience, used to assessing the world in consumerist terms, there is perhaps little surprising about Macartney's description. But the breeziness of its reduction of a new land – and people – to a list of trade resources is significant, not the least because of its nonchalance. Granted, as both an ambassador and representative of the East India Company, trade was the avowed motive for his mission; but that does not change the fact of the aggressive commodity-focus of Macartney's thinking, nor the reliance of that thinking upon scientistic quantification. As with Tourane Bay, Macartney begins with a description of the islands' geophysical accessibility. But the Liuchiu's alliances with both the Chinese and Japanese, and apparent openness to foreign trade – especially in light of their mediocre offerings – seem not to warrant an inventory of their vulnerabilities to

attack. The subtext couldn't be clearer: if the Liuchiu are only hardly worth trading with, they are only hardly worth knowing at all – and certainly not worth invading. And so, with just the faintest trace of a sneer, Macartney finishes his description with what approaches a *bon mot*, speculating archly that they'd be better known to the West if they were rich in anything worthwhile.

Assessing China; Nieuhoffian patterns

But Tourane Bay and the Liuchu islands are mere blips on Macartney's radar, and neither elicits more than a couple paragraphs. The casualness of his peculiar descriptions makes them interesting, but in the absence of similar assessments of China, they might not be very important. Macartney doesn't dally, however, in establishing this Nieuhoffian pattern of description relative to his true subject. With the same eye to quantification and demystification as his Dutch predecessor, but more aggressively deployed, Macartney, for example, describes Shantung province:

> The background of the province of Shantung as we sailed along it appeared generally barren, mountainous and rocky, but wherever we could perceive the smallest interval of cultivable ground it smiled under the hand of industry. We could not well distinguish the kinds of grain that were growing, but they seemed to be Indian corn, millet, beans and peas. (8)

This apparently off-handed comment becomes more ominous the more it is contextualised. Scanning the countryside to its “smallest intervals” to inspect the efficiency of Chinese agriculture, the ambassador's imperial eye devours all. So desirous is he to document his observations that Macartney rather commits speculation to record – “[w]e could not well distinguish the kinds of grain growing, *but”* – than nothing at all. This need to quantify China, to uncover the secrets to its long celebrated natural wealth, dominates Macartney's relationship with the Chinese land in a way that echoes, but surpasses Nieuhof, and brings to mind Drayton's summation of science's ideological contribution to empire: “Those who best used land and labour had the right to control both” (229). Of course, one or two excerpts of this kind would prove little – but Macartney's approach to the Chinese landscape is habitual. Elsewhere, he writes: “I believe there is scarcely an acre of cultivable land in China that is not cultivated. Although a general resemblance runs through the whole nation as viewed in the gross, yet almost every province has its own

particular mode of husbandry" (152-153). Macartney, that is, has continually and actively been noticing not only which parts of China the locals had cultivated, but also how they did so. Describing the agriculture of Yu-san-Chien: "I did not see a spot the whole way that was not... compelled to produce every grain and vegetable of which it was capable" – an unremarkable observation on its own, but he goes on – "The soil is naturally indifferent... [thus] the care with which everything convertible into manure is preserved would appear ridiculous elsewhere, but is here fully justified by the effect" (136-137). He proceeds to describe the region's agricultural methods for several paragraphs, noting the use of terraces, the planting of different crops at different altitudes, the manner of local plough used, the neatness of the husbandry, the quality of roads, the specific technology used to water the terraced crops (a transportable chain pump), and even the spacing of villages (about a mile part) (137). He marvels at the agricultural efficiency he is witnessing: "The husbandry is singularly neat, not a weed to be seen, everything is sown in drills, and there are never less than two crops in the year and often there are three" (137). Only after exhausting this topic does Macartney leave off to discuss the tea plants from the area that he was able to obtain (137). In all of these instances, Macartney marries scientistic observation with approving judgements of the inhabitants on the basis of their ability to successfully work the land, especially in less forgiving regions (hence Shantung's "smile" under "the hand of industry.") Agricultural techne becomes, synechdochally, a primary measure of Chinese culture as a whole.

The attempted appropriation of the waterwheels

Especially notably in this vein, in the section of his journal-closing "Observations" on Chinese "Arts and Sciences," Macartney devotes an entire section to "Hydraulics." In this section, he reproduces blueprints of a particular "simple, ingenious and effective" build of waterwheel used by the Chinese for "raising water from rivers to the high banks, not exceeding forty feet, for the purposes of irrigation" (243). Macartney's detailing of the waterwheel is so minute and confusing that Cranmer-Byng omits most of it in place of a quick and exasperated summary (244).[47] Macartney describes its size, the materials from which it is built, and even goes into extensive calculations to determine roughly how much water the wheel is capable of delivering per hour. He finally arrives at the conclusion that

47. Cranmer-Byng: "Here follows a technical – and rather confusing – discussion concerning the components and construction of a typical Chinese waterwheel" (244).

“in twenty-four hours this very simple and slight machine will raise forty thousand three hundred and twenty gallons or one hundred and sixty tons of water” (244). Note the painstaking precision implied by his twin measurements. Not surprisingly, Macartney commissioned a precise illustration of the wheel as well. This section of Macartney's travelogue is remarkable as an overt expression of one of the central goals of the embassy, proving scientism's amenability to mercantilism by way of technological assessment and, where advantageous, appropriation. And while we saw appropriation in Nieuhof as well (e.g. the attempted purchase of the Lou-wa birds), in Macartney the appropriation more common and more blatant.

Measurable and immeasurable China

Perhaps as a direct ramification of his goal of quantifying China, and translating it into known, measurable terms, Macartney at one point gives away his game in a particularly evocative passage on the horrors of China where it *cannot be measured*. In his entry for Sunday, November 24th, he writes:

> [T]he night... was still, moist, cold, and comfortless. The mist grew every moment darker and heavier, and so magnified the objects around us that no wonder our senses and imaginations were equally deceived and disturbed, and that the temples, turrets, and pagodas appeared to us through the fog, as we sailed along, like so many phantoms of giants and monsters flitting away from us, and vanishing in the gloom.(138-139)

This marked eruption of monstrous imagery stands out as one of the most vivid passages in Macartney's entire journal, not the least because of its fantastic simile. Chinese architecture, which he has elsewhere memorably compared to a harmonious face made out of all ugly features (243, and quoted in full below), becomes here something even more grotesque: the skulking “phantoms of giants and monsters.” Absent the scrupulous brightness of the sun, Chinese buildings, half cloaked in darkness, “deceive and disturb” Macartney and crew by their flouting of familiar Western forms. They are somehow akin to – or perhaps embodiments of – the “still, moist, cold, comfortless” foggy night through which they stalk. Where it cannot be seen, be measured, be categorized; where Macartney is unable to deploy scientific methodology to assess and contain it, the manmade Chinese environment swells into a swaggering parade of boogeymen. There is something childlike about Macartney's description – one imagines a toddler terrified by the

long night shadows flitting across the bedroom wall. Where it cannot be quantified, China terrifies Macartney's – and significantly, his cohorts' – British eyes with its ambiguity and size. If any single passage in Macartney's journal sums up the emotional undercurrent that belies his perpetual scientistic analyses of China, it is this one. Macartney's white whale is a black pagoda.

And this fact is substantiated by Macartney's unusually effusive description of the gardens at Jehol, which, though quite different in tone from the previous passage, converges finally on the same sentiment. On Sunday, 15th September, Macartney writes:

> It would be an endless task were I to attempt a detail of all the wonders of this charming place. There is no beauty of distribution and contrast, no feature or amenity, no reach of fancy which embellishes our pleasure grounds in England, that is not to be found here. Had China been accessible to Mr. Brown or to Mr. Hamilton I should have sworn they had drawn their happiest ideas from the rich sources which I have tasted this day; for in the course of a few hours I have enjoyed such vicissitudes of rural delight, as I did not conceive could be felt out of England, being at different moments enchanted by scenes perfectly similar to those I had known there, to the magnificence of Stowe, the soft beauties of Woburn or the fairy-land of Painshill. (73)

Macartney outdoes himself here, the rollicking gait of his prose alone conveying such exaltation that the passage fairly sings. It is all over with superlatives: there is no English gardening art or “embellishment” that the Chinese have not also mastered. The description is notable for its geographical comparisons: Jehol's grandeur does not merely ring English, or approximate English garden aesthetics, but in fact contains “scenes perfectly similar” to *three* distinct, and distinctive, English estate gardens. It has, somehow, to the ambassador's delirious joy, reproduced England within itself. Clearly, Macartney looks upon the gardens of Jehol as a triumph of their medium. But what is the significance of this enthusiasm?

In fact, his description dovetails perfectly with the previous passage. Just as Macartney depicts China where it cannot be measured as quite literally a writhing mass of “giants and monsters,” he depicts China where it is not only naked to British eyes, but *reminiscent of Britain*, as, unsurprisingly, nearly beyond reproach – nearly. The ambassador's rapturous description does not come from any deep understanding of Chinese aesthetics or culture, however, but from his capacity to project British aesthetics upon a China that he has not attempted to measure by any other standards. The notion that any other legitimate standards could exist at all does not appear to cross his mind.

(Were he primarily concerned, after all, with understanding Chinese customs from the inside out, rather than forcing outward the recognition of British superiority, then would his disastrous kowtow kerfuffle have happened at all?) And so, unsurprisingly, from the high point reproduced above, Macartney soon falls into the niggling that is more characteristic of his journal's observations. Unable to refrain from vitiating the recommendation he has only just given, he self-consciously adopts the pose of botanist to write, just two paragraphs later:

> In many places the lake is overspread with the nenuphar, or lotus (*nymphea*), resembling our broad-leaved water-lily. This is an accompaniment which, though the Chinese are passionately fond of, cultivating it in all their pieces of water, I confess I don't much admire. Artificial rocks and ponds, with gold and silver fish, are perhaps too often introduced, and the monstrous porcelain figures of lions and tigers usually placed before the pavilions, are displeasing to an European eye. But these are trifles of no great moment, and I am astonished that now, after a six hours critical survey of these gardens, I can scarcely recollect anything besides to find fault with. (73)

I do not find Macartney's final assertion convincing. It has the passive-aggressive quality of any compliment given by a constitutional pedant; he is “astonished” to be able to give it at all. Even here in splendid Jehol, it seems Macartney cannot long gaze upon Chinese works without tripping his prim “European eye” – the same one that is so “disturbed” by shadowy architecture – over something “monstrous.”[48] And when he does, it must, of course, be catalogued. In detail. Although “*when* he does” perhaps gives the wrong idea: like an implacable governess, Macartney always finds a fault. In the entry from the prior Sunday, for example, he quips: “A Chinese gardener is the painter of nature, and though totally ignorant of perspective as a science, produces the happiest effects” (62) through other, simpler means. Again, as so often in his journal, Macartney figures a Chinese deficiency as a failure of “scientific” achievement, surprisingly compensated for in other ways. We find this same sentiment in his assessment of Jehol, but writ large. In the end, the ambassador's apparent garland of compliments, so bright on the surface, turns out to be a condescension. Only well-behaved Chinas merit praise. And to Macartney's standards, that means playing by, or at least convincingly appearing to play by, British

48. Houckgeest makes an interesting contrast here. He has much less to say overall about Chinese gardens than Macartney, but at one point reflects that: “Every thing is intermingled, and seems on the point of being confounded; the triumph of genius is to prevent the smallest disorder that might hurt the eye” (vol. II, 138). There's that probing European eye again! Houckgeest's, however, does not seem perturbed by lions and tigers.

rules.[49]

Comparing European and Chinese techne

But the ominous potential of Macartney's nitpicking extend beyond measuring regional vulnerability and appropriating native technologies – to the assessment of the Chinese people themselves. Indeed, Macartney's measures of the Chinese by their technologies is one of the defining characteristics of his journal. For example, he admires that although “most of the province of Kiangsi... is a poor soil,” and “not naturally very fertile,” that nevertheless the land was “wonderfully well cultivated.” He even pays the Chinese an unqualified compliment, all the more memorable for its strange, terse flatness. “The Chinese are certainly the best husbandmen in the world” (139) he writes, without further explication, before changing the subject. Especially notable is Macartney's discussion of the most celebrated of Chinese infrastructures, “the numberless communications by water through the interior of their country” (237). The courses of these waterways Macartney describes in some detail, before generalizing that “[f]rom the account above it may be inferred that the Chinese in flat or nearly flat countries are chiefly directed by the apparent course of the natural streams [and] follow it as nearly as possible, without regarding the labour or expense attending such a system” (239). Here the Chinese, instead of manipulating nature’s organic patterns as they do in arranging their magnificent (not to say perfect) gardens, allow nature to set the course of their design (62; 73; 242). So doing, however, they create more work for themselves in the end, and Macartney concludes that Chinese technology is less impressive in its own right than simply for the extent of its implementation.[50] Still, he admits that Chinese water architecture, specifically flood gates, are superior to European ones in certain situations (239).[51] The pains to which Macartney goes to detail these and other examples of Chinese

49. Blue makes passing but useful commentary on this subject, writing that, “At the end of the seventeenth [century], Chinoiserie and Gothic styles were linked in an assault upon the austere symmetry of aesthetic neo-classicism” (70). This observation, if only tangentially related to Macartney's personal tastes, does emphasize that at the time of Macartney's embassy a dichotomizaton of (at least) neo-classicism and the perceived frippery and asymmetry of Chinoiserie had been registered on a broad cultural level in Western Europe.

50. Which recalls, again, Bray's thesis on the fundamentally capitalist, Eurocentric distinction between increases in commodity production as a result of technological efficiency vs. involution. See also my discussion, in “Premodern Techne, East and West” of this thesis, of Pomeranz, who too notes the (not specifically Chinese) logic of involution.

51. Macartney explains: “Since writing the above I have received the following note from Dr Dinwiddie who, having separated from me at Hangchowfu in order to proceed to Chusan... had an opportunity of examining

technology, especially those like the flood gates that rival their European equivalents, implies an anxious need to convince himself that, after all, the Chinese couldn't possibly equal the British scientifically: a point his demystifying explanations, with their exhausting quantifications and generally muted enthusiasm, make tacitly again and again. This would also explain his ambivalence even when he does encounter an example of Chinese technological superiority.

As a case in point, let us consider Macartney's discussion, during his "Observations," of the state of Chinese sericulture and silk weaving. He writes:

> The raw material itself is, I understand, superior to any of the same kind of any other country; but I have been assured that the fabrics of Lyons and Spitalfields are sometimes even superior to those of Nanking. Of this I cannot pretend to judge, but admitting that the Chinese can weave the best silks in the world, it is no less true that they also make the worst, for they suffer nothing to be lost; the flosses, combings, refuse, etc., are all carefully saved and worked into some useful texture or other, such as nettings, curtains, gauzes, girdles, etc. All that I could learn relative to the silk, silk worms, and mulberry trees of China is contained in my answers to the Honorable East India Company's queries to which I refer. I am concerned to say that they are not very satisfactory, for I found it impossible to obtain all the information I wanted. (241)

Again, Macartney struggles to reconcile the sophistication of Chinese industry with a presumption of Western technological superiority, and it infuses his entire passage with a certain anxiety. He vacillates over the world ranking of Chinese raw silk: is it truly the best in the world? He both "understands" that it is, but is "assured" that it is not, that French and English manufacturers are superior. In both cases he is referring to anecdotal evidence, and arrives at a final plea of ignorance before declaring in no uncertain terms that whatever the status of China's best silks, it undoubtedly produces the world's worst. He attributes this to Chinese thrift; the weavers make use of every last scrap of serviceable material. In a different – say, European – context, it is easy to imagine Macartney interpreting this habit as evidence of resourcefulness and industry. Indeed, he nears the sentiment, listing several products for which lower quality silks are often used. But here it reads almost as an indictment. One that leads directly into the confession that he has been unable to gather nearly as much information on Chinese sericultural and silk weaving methods as he had "wanted." Macartney's logic begins with an assessment of the quality of a general Chinese manufacture (i.e. silk textiles), proceeds to what discussion is

more at leisure not only the common canals, but also the others whose communication is preserved by means of a glacis..." (239). He goes on from there to relate Dr. Dimwiddie's observations.

possible of the techne required to produce it, provides a list of examples of specific iterations of the good, and ends finally, and alas, with the rueful acknowledgement that not enough information of it had yet been obtained for actual appropriation to occur.

What, exactly, does Macartney gain from diminishing Chinese scientific achievement in this way? On the one hand, the gentleman doth protest too much, and his explanations – quite literally circumscriptions of Chinese knowledge by English text, and a bit of a spectacle of Freudian reaction-formation – can, on one level, be read as wishful containments of the threat of Chinese ingenuity. This certainly is the impression given by his similar assessment of the Chinese printing press. Mindful of his didactic duties as Western commentator, Macartney writes: “As it is generally supposed that the art of printing is of great antiquity among the Chinese, I must not pass it by without some notice” (240). He goes on to describe it:

> Their printing, such as I saw, is merely a wooden cut... which when wetted with ink and impressed by the paper, delivers a reversed copy of itself. From the size of the page, which is incapable of decomposition, from the necessary accuracy of the process, and the tediousness of execution, it would seem that new publications are not very frequent, and that knowledge is not so rapidly disseminated in China as in England by reviews, magazines and such other periodical oracles of taste and literature. (240)

Notwithstanding that Macartney's highborn sarcasm in this passage extends also to his native country's “oracles of taste and literature,” the point of this commentary is to demystify China's printing press and make clear its inferiority to England's press. The Chinese use “mere wooden cuts” to “tediously execute” infrequent publications. Knowledge simply cannot “disseminate” here as it does in England, despite all that has previously been made of Chinese skill in printing. And that so much had been made of it is just the point: starting with an invocation of China's illustrious reputation as the birthplace of the printing press, Macartney proceeds to methodically dismantle this reputation, one minute observation at a time. “Whether printing as practiced by us be an original European invention, or whether the first hint of it was derived from China, I will not presume to determine” he says finally, before slyly implying the former by noting that the first record of it in Europe did not appear until 150 years after Marco Polo's return from China, and was never mentioned by that august traveller. Despite his lack of open disdain, a subtle but distinct arrogance pervades Macartney's analysis; in any case, the function of passages like these is to reposition China, vis-à-vis England especially, as the less ingenious, less

industrious empire. And for neither the first nor last time, he does this through scientistic analysis of a culturally and economically vital technology.

It is interesting to compare Macartney's assessment of Chinese printing to Kircher's, from his *China Illustrata* (as excerpted in Nieuhof). Kircher's critique of Chinese printing seems largely to agree with Macartney's, and he says of “that ingenious art of PRINTING,” that it:

> [W]as us'd by [the Chinese] long before it was known in Europe: But yet they understand not the right use of it, being ignorant of the Art of Founding Letters, or Composing with them, but Cutting or Engraving upon Wood what they have to Print, like our Sculp'd Plates fitted for the Rowling-Press; so that not being able to Distribute their Character, they are forc'd to have a standing Form for every Page, by which means the Printing of one Volume oft-times filleth a whole House with their Typographical Tables; as for Example, if the whole have but 100 Sheets, they must have 400 Tables. (Antiquities of China, 426).

This description of Kircher's, in so closely substantiating Macartney's, which was written over a century later, seems to validate Macartney's observations, and perhaps even save them from my accusation of scientism on grounds that they were, after all, quite accurate. But I will note that Kircher's description, like Macartney's, occurs in the context of a larger comparison of European versus Chinese technologies. Both authors are keenly concerned in this case to determine who has developed it further; a fact that I cannot but feel points to an underlying anxiety over the general sophistication of the Chinese.

But moreover, Macartney's habitual inscriptions of Chinese techne (and perhaps to a lesser extent, aesthetics), whatever their tone, can also be read as a clever, self-eliding incorporation of Chinese knowledge into the British cannon. Under guise of critique, he can appropriate Chinese techne and manufacturing methods even while soothing the anxiety they provoke. However, to his credit, Macartney is typically more direct in his appropriations; a dynamic that we may look to Kitson to explain. One of the main arguments underpinning Kitson's claim that “Britons and their collaborators constructed a ‘new’ idea of China in the [Romantic] period… inflected by their own increasingly national concerns” (3), is that China as a Romantic-era trope was never a flat Saidian caricature, taken for granted by the British imaginary. “Rather than imposing a fully formed notion of British science and modernity on Asia, Britain was at this crucial time forging its own sense of national identity informed by its encounters with other cultures such as China's” (3). China, a dynamic and imposing presence on all fronts – certainly economically, as the

premier hub of a network of trade routes cobwebbing the globe – became central to the British identity because it, frankly, couldn't *not* do. It was too vast, and too powerful for the Western upstarts to ignore. And though the respect it elicited from them may have been a fraught and ambivalent respect, inflected by imperialist anxiety and as begrudgingly given as a Macartneyan compliment, it was nevertheless one born from engagement with an active participant, not a docile receptacle. As a serious imperial competitor, it seems China's world prominence if not demanded at least invited the plundering of its intellectual heritage – a claim which finds support in the fact that the theft of Chinese techne and trade commodities was Joseph Banks' top directive to Macartney. Macartney is candid in his journal about these designs himself, stating plainly on more than one occasion that he desires to take Chinese tea plants to Bengal for cultivation:

> The Viceroy, observing our curiosity about everything relative to natural history, allowed us to collect seeds and fossils as we came along, and to take up several tea plants in a growing state with large balls of earth adhering to them, which tea plants I flatter myself I shall be able to transmit to Bengal. (138; see also 132)

It is telling that Macartney euphemistically frames his desire to poach valuable Chinese tea as "curiosity about everything relative to natural history." The fossils he mentions may have been intended for show amongst his Royal Society pals, but he is very clear that the tea plants are meant, ultimately, to literally and figuratively seed a British industry. Again we find them: imperialism and scientism, hand in hand. (Incidentally, that the Viceroy acceded to Macartney's request for tea, when he must have known how important an export it was, is rather surprising, especially given how "jealous" (132) Macartney says the Chinese were of parting with any similarly valuable silkworms; but as his views of the matter are not accessible to me, I shall have to leave them aside.) Taken in sum, the ambassador's disparagement of certain technologies (e.g. Chinese printing) and appropriation of others (e.g. Chinese water wheels); and, as in this case, appropriation of Chinese commodities (e.g. tea) for British benefit – are amenable on all counts to imperialist ambition. Technologies and commodities he deems valuable, Macartney attempts to take without compunction; and those he does not deem valuable, he uses, without apparently even a blush of cognitive dissonance, to inspire doubt in Chinese technological achievement.

It is not difficult to see how this doubt would have been useful in preserving

Macartney's sense of the superiority of British culture. By criticizing Chinese scientific and technological (and even aesthetic) achievements, Macartney protects a central pillar of his own identity. He also helps to undo what romanticisation of the Chinese still remained in his day (Voltaire, for instance, whom Macartney knew, continued to idealize the Chinese until late in his career).[52] And in these ways, he contributes to that denigration of the Chinese that must precede any more extreme dehumanization. Scientism was instrumental to this process. And that is why, ultimately, I must disagree with Clingham's central claim that Macartney's Eurocentricity is somehow mitigated or balanced out by his occasional moments of sympathy with the Qing, as significant as these are. A great example of his ambivalence, also from the “Observations”:

> The architecture of the Chinese is of a peculiar style, totally unlike any other, irreducible to our rules, but perfectly consistent with its own. It has certain principles from which it never deviates; and although, when examined according to ours, it sins against the ideas we have imbibed of distribution, composition and proportion, yet upon the whole it often produces a most pleasing effect; as we sometimes see a person without a single good feature in his face, have nevertheless a very agreeable countenance. (243)

Macartney's wit is impossible to deny; but so is his perpetual difficulty in granting the Chinese unqualified praise. The compliment that rounds out the passage above is so backhanded that it stings to this day. Macartney's goal here seems to be to reaffirm, in the face of China's “peculiar” architectural style, the superiority of Western, presumably neo-classical, architecture, with its emphasis on balance, order, and linearity. We saw before how Temple contrasted these with the delicate asymmetry of sharawadgi – to considerably different effect than Macartney. Macartney's description, with its idealization of “distribution, composition and proportion” exalts the mathematically inflected aesthetics of the Enlightenment. That is, it exalts scientific principles as aesthetic ones. The mysterious and incomprehensible Chinese somehow attain a certain internal coherence even forgoing these principles, but Macartney's description hardly reads like a recommendation of the Chinese method – and it is not one. The slightest comparison to Temple's enthusiasm settles the matter there.

Joking at China's expense

52. Blue gives a useful and brief gloss of Voltaire's views of the Chinese (66).

But recourse to Temple is not, as it turns out, strictly necessary. There is one other notable barb in Macartney's journal, and it too derives from the ambassador's desperate confidence in his own fine taste. His tour of a major Buddhist temple at Potala occasions the following observation of Buddhist icons:

> There are, in some of these pagodas, a thousand of these monstrous statues, all most horribly ugly, and so ill-represented, and so unlike anything in heaven or earth, or in the waters under the earth, that one would think they might be safely worshipped even by the Jews without incurring the guilt of idolatry. (83)

I admit to laughing aloud the first time I read this pronouncement, which could as well have come from Lady Bracknell. For all that Clingham is correct in asserting that several times in his journal, Macartney sympathizes – even empathizes – with the Chinese, it is unmistakable that on purely literary grounds he is at his best when he is on the attack.[53] His unconscious pomposity here, and the great purple build-up that leads to his punchline, so fulfils one's notion of the Supercilious British Aristocrat that it is almost impossible not to forgive him for it. But entertainment value aside, Macartney's condescending sport of the Chinese is not incidental, because humour is never incidental. Freud tells us that humour is a process of the psychic economy that mitigates anxiety by transforming it into positive affect (or at least distracting us from negative affect) (Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious, 165-166). Here, as in Macartney's quip about Chinese architecture being a pleasant face without any pleasant features, Macartney is compelled to belittle an aesthetic that cannot be translated into crisp, neo-classical European terms. Where scientism fails, sardonicism, apparently, prevails. In Macartney, both function to psychically neutralize the threat posed by Chinese Otherness. A fact which might not amount to more than an amusing aside, but that the equivalence of scientism and demeaning humour on this point underscores my central claim that scientism is fundamentally dehumanizing; and that that, along with its convenient aura of noble objectivity, is precisely why, historically, scientism has so well been able to abet imperial aggression.

Indictment of the Qing

And indeed, it is possible to press this sentiment about the relation between

53. Macartney offers, for instance, an eloquent defence of the Chinese in the face of their tradition of foot-binding – while still condemning the practice as abominable – by comparing it to European corseting (184-187). I do not, however, find that moments of measured consideration like this are characteristic of Macartney's views of the Chinese overall.

scientism and imperial aggression even further. It is quite likely that Macartney's description of the Qing foreshadows later British military action against them; that in his language all the ideological components of the excuses that would eventually be made for the Opium Wars are already discernible. I posit that Macartney's textual containment of China by the terms of Western science helped shift British estimation of China enough to make subsequent aggression culminating in the Opium Wars seem a legitimate response to Chinese trade restrictions. This is not to say that Macartney alone precipitated the first Opium War; as I have already shown in previous comparisons to Nieuhof, Macartney's approach to China was embedded in an ideological ground that had begun to form at least a century earlier. But it certainly is true that Macartney's portrait of the Qing as a once-grand empire in decline – a depiction clothed in, and in fact rhetorically dependent upon the presumed objectivity of scientistic thought – both undermined the awe in which the empire had long been held, and presented China as, on various levels, an assailable opponent after all. Macartney's observations of Chinese technologies were neither a fluke nor performed simply to satisfy the whims of the Royal Society. They were an aggressive measurement of Chinese efficiency motivated by the tacit assumption that a China that had lost its scientific and technological edge over the West would not only be open to conquest, but be practically begging for imperial – as we might call it today – "intervention."

There is evidence for this both in the ambassador's own words, and, significantly, those words' dubious afterlife. Macartney speculates that because of the Qianlong Emperor's aversion to scientific progress, the Chinese have come to teeter on the edge of atavism (234). It is significant that Macartney does not seem to connect this "decay" in Chinese science to natural impediment – figured either externally, as some limiting factor in the Chinese environment, or internally, as the flaw or quirk of a presumptively inherent Chinese character. He perhaps hints at the latter when he claims that "[m]ost of the things which the Chinese know they seem to have invented themselves, to have applied them solely to the purpose wanted, and to have never thought of improving or extending them further" (236). But that seems unlikely given his indictment of Qianlong's indifference to scientific study, which Macartney explains as an effect of "the policy of the present government to discourage all novelties, and to prevent their subjects as much as possible from entertaining a higher opinion of foreigners than of themselves" (234). He also suspects China's massive population, in granting a sort of wealth of manpower, has counterintuitively stunted Chinese innovation, speculating that:

> So far they have proceeded in the use of [the single pulley] but no further, because, as from the immense population of the country, any number of hands can be easily procured. Their principle is rather to gain in time than in power, otherwise having already employed the single pulley, the double one would have naturally occurred to them" (236).[54]

There is something perverse about the Chinese: they ought to have "naturally" discovered the double pulley – which suggests at least that Macartney considers them latently able to rise above their present level of technological development – but a faulty "principle" has arrested their development. They have failed to "cultivate" the sciences, and this lack of cultivation is the reason for the ever widening gap between their civilization and that of Europe.

Macartney elaborates this theory eloquently, in one of his journal's most important instances of thematic scientism:

> It sometimes happens that men by mere dint of natural parts, without the advantage of education... will hit upon methods of accomplishing great undertakings, where the most plausible theories have been found insufficient or inapplicable to the purpose; but this can rarely happen except in a country like Europe, where the general effect of the mechanical powers is familiar to the vulgar, from the daily observance of their universal use. Thus every common person will have recourse to a pulley, a lever, a tooth and pinion wheel, because he has seen them perform their functions a thousand times, and although he has no just idea of their exact powers, yet by repeated trials he is certain of succeeding. But in a country like China, where the sciences, which first pointed out those artificial powers, are little known and little cultivated, difficulties when they occur can only be surmounted by the increase and exertions of numbers. (236)

Macartney's reasoning is sound enough, even persuasive. The European, from long cohabitation with pulleys, levers, and other useful feats of mechanical engineering (with which Macartney at several points in his journal shows considerable familiarity) becomes fluent in their use, even if he does not understand the exact principles behind why they work. The Chinese, however, has not benefited from the same technological trickle-down effect, since his intellectual elite have "little cultivated" science. This passage is

54. To highlight the bias in Macartney's assessment we might consider Needham's declaration that "one constantly finds that in spite of the seemingly inexhaustible masses of man-power in China, lugging and hauling was avoided whenever possible. How striking it is that in all Chinese history there is no parallel for the slave-manned oared war galley of the Mediterranean... When the water-mill appeared in the first century AD for blowing metallurgical bellows the records concerning Tu Shih distinctly say that he considered it important as being both more humane and cheaper than man-power or animal-power" (34).

remarkable for a few reasons: most fundamentally, it conflates science and technology in a thoroughly modern way that presumes that increased scientific understanding necessarily leads to more sophisticated technologies. An in-depth analysis of the legitimacy of this claim would draw me far outside the orbit of the current work, but it is interesting to note that Macartney, in the late 18th century, was already connecting the two. But more generally, and more importantly overall to current purposes, this passage compares China to Europe on expressly scientific grounds (as Macartney himself designates them), and finds China lacking. “[I]n a country like China, where the sciences” are not sanctioned, he reasons, a general deficiency has become obvious. If there were any doubt about the centrality of scientism to Macartney's conception of the Chinese, this passage must satisfy it. In China, Macartney finds a people whose technological difference from Europe justifies their complete recategorization as human beings – a “country like” the former is clearly distinct from a “country like” the latter. Macartney has explicitly distinguished two peoples on the basis of their scientific and technological understanding.

Macartney’s dissatisfaction with the state of Chinese science, and the Chinese' consequent inability to recognize Britain's scientific superiority, is a perpetual feature of his journal – and typically directed at the Qing mandarins. In particular, his petulant insistence upon the mandarins' performance of disaffection faced with British technology becomes something of a mantra during his visit with the Emperor. Macartney gripes that “it was observed that most of the great men who came to see the globes, the planetarium, the barometers, and pendulums put up at Yuan Ming Yuan affected to view them with careless indifference,” expressing some relief when recalling, “they could not, however, conceal their sense of the beauty and elegance of our Derby porcelain, when they saw the ornamental bases belonging to Vulliamy's clocks” (235). Macartney is so sure of the impressive quality of his gifts that he cannot even entertain the idea that the Chinese did not, at least in their secret innermost hearts, stand in awe of them (Kitson, 127-128). Macartney’s feat here is remarkable: sussing out a simple, rational cause for the noted effect of Chinese scientific retrograde, he self-affirmingly manages to bring his scientific ideology to bear upon its own absence among the Qing. It is their own fault – that of their mandarins, at least – that they have not kept up with Europe. Thus he declares of the Chinese that “[i]n respect to science they are certainly far behind the European world,” before going on, with palpable scorn, to complain of the Qing mandarins particularly that “none of them discovered the slightest notion of the pressure of fluids, the principles of optics, perspective, electricity, etc.” although they had had occasion to observe such

things in the workings of European technology gifted to the emperor (235). He is willing to modify a similar sentiment some few pages later, in the “Navigation” section of his “Observations”:

> In my journal of the 11 August 1793 I have some account of the junks and shipping employed by the Chinese, and expressed my astonishment at their obstinacy in not imitating the ingenuity and dexterity of Europeans in the build and manoeuvre of their vessels, after having had such striking examples before their eyes for these two hundred and fifty years past; but I must now, in good measure, retract my censures on this point, as... I believe the yachts and other craft usually employed [upon the rivers and canals]... are perfectly well calculated for the purposes intended, and probably superior to any other that we in our vanity might advise them to adopt. (245)

This is one of the few times in Macartney's record that he truly rises to Clingham's opinion of him. But it is crucial to note that even here Macartney's gracious retraction is predicated on his deciding that Chinese sailing techne wasn't so bad after all “for the purposes intended.” He is far from asserting that the Chinese could match “the ingenuity and dexterity of the Europeans” overall. In his estimations of both cultures, the ability to master the natural environment is a key determinant. It just so happens that on this particular count Macartney feels he misspoke – and so he makes due note of the flub, but only after being sure to emphasize the sophistication of the Europeans generally.[55] His precision in marking out the exact journal passage in which he makes his mistake is admirable: the gesture seems, by implication, to ensure the truthfulness of the rest of his entries. It is, as both an example of Macartney's fallibility and of the Chinese surpassing his expectations of them in a given technological arena, an exception that proves the rule.

And this in fact is precisely the effect of Macartney's next paragraph. “With regards to vessels of a different kind for more distant voyages... I am informed that the Chinese of Canton, who have had frequent opportunities of seeing our ships there, are by no means insensible of the advantage they possess over their own” (246). The Hoppo of Canton, however, refused to allow any Chinese to “depart from the ancient established [ship-building] modes of the Empire which, according to his notions, must be wiser and better than those barbarous nations which come from Europe to trade with them” (246). Macartney cannot restrain himself from using this latter remark as a jumping off point for a topic we have already heard him address:

55. And he does indeed, after his normal fashion, go on later to enumerate the Chinese' various navigational deficiencies: they have “neither charts of their coasts or seas... nor forestaff, quadrant or other instrument for taking the sun's altitude” (247).

> It is indeed, as I have before remarked, the prevailing system of the Tartar Government to impress the people with an idea of their own sufficiency, and to undervalue in their eyes as much as possible the superior invention of foreign nations; but their vigilance in this respect, and the pains they take for the purpose, evidently betray the conscious fears and jealousy they entertain of their subjects' taste for novelty, and their sagacity in discovering and wishing to adopt the various articles of European ingenuity for use, convenience and luxury, in preference to their own clumsy old-fashioned contrivances. (246)

Identifying China's current state of scientific decay as an effect of Qing mismanagement, Macartney implicates the "Tartar Government" as a government of brutes, anxious of their Han subjects' tastes for clearly superior European wares. But doing so he also, in light of his reading of Chinese history, implicitly delegitimizes the Qing's claim to a technological heritage accumulated during an implied but never specified Golden Age prior to their political ascendency. One they have neglected – a convenient justification for the appropriation of this heritage by the British.[56]

An appropriation which Macartney's travelogue literally and self-consciously attempts to carry out. It is with a mixture of exasperation and pride, for instance, that he describes the silkworm eggs that he "with great difficulty" was "so fortunate to procure," explaining that "[t]he Chinese, whether from jealousy or superstition or both, could scarcely be persuaded to part with them" (132). Macartney does not overtly connect his interest in Chinese sericulture to Chinese scientific naivete, but the episode does suggest that Macartney considers the jealousy- and superstition-bound Chinese unjustified in withholding their sericultural techne from British possession. The implication here and throughout his journal is clear: the Qing's claim to China's abundant natural resources is only valid insofar as they possess the ability – including, crucially, the scientific know-how – to properly manage them. Best use of nature, indeed. Stepping back to consider his travelogue as a whole, even when Macartney does admit to Chinese ingenuity, his attempts at appropriation imply that these useful technologies and agricultural methods would be *better* utilized by the British. This is a profoundly scientistic attitude, and one that trends in the direction of assigning the British a prerogative for Chinese commodities and technologies on the basis of superior scientific understanding.

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56. See for instance Macartney's discussion of Emperor K'iang-hsi's active employment, "about fourscore years ago," of well-learned missionaries to teach advanced mathematics and "experimental philosophy" to his court. In context, Macartney is lamenting Qianlong's neglect of European learning amongst his people (234).

All of this said, it is of course quite a leap to go from advocating, however discretely, for the appropriation of foreign knowledge – to advocating for war. But that Macartney's reasoning heads in just such a direction is borne out by both his own words, and subsequent historical events. Regarding the former: Macartney was not shy about boasting that British aggression against the Chinese could only end in their ruin. Doubting (as it would turn out correctly) that his embassy's requests – as for the appointment of a resident British ambassador in Peking – would be met, he at one point in his journal fumes:

> Can they be ignorant that a couple English frigates would be an overmatch for the whole naval force of their empire, that in half a summer they could totally destroy all the navigation of their coasts and reduce the inhabitants of the maritime provinces, who subsist chiefly on fish, to absolute famine? (118-119)

Here, Macartney makes clear that British naval technology alone is not only enough to raze the entire Chinese navy, but reduce the coastal inhabitants to starvation. He makes no overtures towards self-justification. The possibility that his embassy will not achieve its goals is enough to stir up a fantasy of devastation; the ambassador frames it as a rhetorical question because its feasibility gives it a likelihood that he assumes must also be obvious to the Chinese. No thought is given to the morality of the scenario. In fact, Macartney implies that Britain has been magnanimous in attempting diplomacy to begin with, with such a navally inferior nation. And it is that idea – Britain's technological superiority to China – that the whole scenario revolves around. Macartney apparently takes it for granted that technological might makes right: if China will not cede to British demands, war must be the logical response.

Macartney reiterates this sentiment in a collective entry spanning Jan 1 through January 7th:

> If, indeed, the Chinese were provoked to interdict us their commerce, or do us any material injury, we certainly have the means easy enough of revenging ourselves, for a few frigates could in a few weeks destroy all their coast navigation and intercourse from the island of Hainan to the Gulf of Pei-Chihli, and if I were to indulge the speculations of an ambitious or vindictive politician, I doubt not but we might vulnerate them sensibly in many other quarters. (162-163)

He goes on to describe how Britain might be able to draw neighbouring nations into the conflict to their benefit: the Bengalese, the Koreans, the Formosans. The Portuguese could be made to abandon Macao easily, which would negate their presence as potential Chinese allies and trade partners; this might be done by invading Macao from “Madras,” or by establishing a competing settlement in “Lantao” or “Cowhee” (163). “The forts of the Bocca Tigris might be demolished by half a dozen broadsides... and the whole trade of Canton annihilated in a season” he writes, before bragging that “[t]he millions of people who subsist by it would be almost instantly reduced to hunger and insurrection” (163). Then he hypothesizes how Russia might be stirred to action against China from this activity – and continues to hypothesize, for several paragraphs, about the additional knock-on effects of such a war. Macartney's speculations here, especially given their level of detail, cannot be overemphasized. They are not vague, petulant fantasies born from personal frustration, but considered scenarios. They address the vulnerabilities of specific Chinese geographic regions to a specific British military technology, the frigate. And what kicks off this ominous line of thought? The possibility that China might “interdict” trade with Britain – the following clause about the possibility of China “materially injuring” Britain reads like an afterthought; an addendum meant to soften an otherwise brazen declaration of imperialist greed. And while on the one hand this passage seems to indicate that by the time of Macartney's embassy, British anxiety over the uncertain future of its trade with China was quite high – high enough to tempt the ambassador to not only entertain dark hypotheticals, but commit them to paper – for the purposes of this thesis, it is equally important to note that Macartney makes military technology central to his ruminations. Indeed, the only clear images in the passage, aside from the Chinese locations, are the frigates that float through it: an image that we have seen Macartney brandish before as a fetish of British military strength, and an almost preternaturally apt symbol for the convergence of British technology and British imperialism.

But aside from Macartney's blatant military reconnaissance, there is another way in which his journal seems to directly anticipate the disintegration of Sino-British trade relations. Although he does not always distinguish between the Han Chinese and the Tartars (Manchu), when he does specify the latter, it is almost always to foreground their status as cultural interlopers. He writes tellingly at one point that “a series of two hundred years in the succession of eight or ten monarchs did not change the Mogul into a Hindu, nor has a century and a half made Chi'en-lung a Chinese. He remains at this hour, in all his maxims of policy, as true a Tartar as any of his ancestors” (197) – a statement that

underscores the image of the Qing as usurpers. And in several instances, Macartney draws this distinction by reference to the contemporary Qing court's failure to encourage scientific inquiry. He asserts, for example, that the Tartars “prefer active military duty to tranquil or sedentary occupations” like education (197). In the “Manners and Character” chapter of the “Observations” that end his journal, Macartney gives the following gloss on Chinese history:

> When Marco Polo, the Venetian, visited China in the 13th century, it was about the time of the conquest of China by the western or Mongol Tartars, with Kublai Khan, a grandson of Genghis Khan, at their head. A little before that period the Chinese had reached their highest pitch of civilisation, and no doubt they were then a very civilised people in comparison of their Tartar conquerors, and their European contemporaries, but not having improved and advanced forward, or having rather gone back, at least for these one hundred fifty years past, since the last conquest by the northern or Manchu tartars; whilst we have been every day rising in arts and sciences, they are actually become a semi-barbarous people in comparison with the present nations of Europe. (176)

The scorn and scientism both of this passage are difficult to miss, but perhaps more disturbing is how familiar Macartney's portrayal of a premodern China devoid of innovation and dynamism will be to (at least) any modern-day student of the premodern era. Macartney makes this complaint more than once: lamenting, for instance, how little Qianlong patronizes the sciences (“Neither Ch-ien-lung himself nor those about him appeared to have any curiosity in these matters”) compared to Kiangxi, and the deleterious effect this has had on the state of Chinese learning overall (234). And while these instances of measuring a civilization by measuring its perceived intellectual achievements comparative to Europe is clearly enough Eurocentric not to require explanation, Macartney's allegations deserve additional consideration for their legacy. For his opinion that the Qing court was responsible for China's “semi-barbarity” would prove crucial decades after his own embassy's failure, in the meteoric rise and catastrophic fall of one Lord William John Napier.

Lord Napier and Macartneyan echoes

As Ulrike Hillemann has written, a generation after Macartney, with the British Crown's dissolution of the East India Company in 1834 and appointment of Napier as Chief Superintendent of the British traders at Canton, Macartney's image of a China

crippled by inept Manchu rulership re-emerged to spectacularly ill effect. Quoting from a letter Napier wrote to Lord Palmerston, Hilleman explains, “Napier again picked up on Macartney's interpretation of the position of the Manchu dynasty in China: 'If the Emperor refuses on demand, remind him that he is only an Intruder and that it would be his good policy to secure himself his throne by gratifying the wish of his people'” (95-96). Lord Napier justifies his aggressive stance towards Qing authority by invoking a distinctly Macartneyan conception of the Qing. One which, as I have shown, was heavily inflected by an aggressive, imperialistic scientism. Napier's goal was to attempt to circumvent established protocols and, in his new role as Chief Superintendent, make his demands directly to the Cantonese viceroy, bypassing the Hong Merchants that had long managed China's side of all Sino-British trade talk. As a show of British might, he even ordered two ships of war into Canton harbour – the first time such a thing had ever been done. This rashness would prove Napier's undoing: not only did he fail to accomplish his primary goal, but provoked the Chinese into temporarily halting all trade whatever with the British; a move which, unsurprisingly, did little to endear him to merchants on either side (Hillemann, 94). In the end, defeated and humiliated, he made his way back from his failed mission in Canton only to die of fever in Macao, in October of the year of his appointment (Hillmann, 94). But the point of this episode is to show that Macartney's scientistically inflected conception of the Chinese did indeed shape later imperial policy, helping to move it towards open military aggression by profoundly informing the conception of China held by later British officials.

Again, to be clear: I am not claiming that Macartney's journal was the only, or even the most important factor influencing Napier's disastrous tenure as Superintendent of Canton. And even if it had been, the First Opium War didn't occur until 1839, some five years after Napier's death, and thirty-three after Macartney's. Rather, I am claiming that consistently in Macartney's recorded thought we find imperialist aggression couched in the distinctive language of scientistic thought, which rhetoric culminates in an overall conception of the Chinese as “semi-barbarous.” A conception that seems later to resurface in the strident declarations of the diplomat whose actions against the Chinese so greatly strained Sino-British relations that they directly set the stage for the Opium War – a coincidence too big to ignore. Moreover, we find in Blue the following quote by Napier's sometime penpal, Lord Palmerston himself, director of British military activities during the Opium Wars:

> These half-civilised governments such as those in China Portugal and Spanish America all require a Dressing every eight or Ten years to keep them in order. Their minds are too shallow to receive an Impression that will last longer than some such Period and warning is of little use. They care little for words and they must not only see the Stick but feel it on their Shoulders before they yield. (77)

Blue does not connect this tirade, made in 1850, directly to Macartney. But it hardly strains the imagination to see Palmerston's conception of the Chinese, and the vehemence of his aggression towards them, as a bolder colouring of Napier's – which was itself a bolder colouring of Macartney's own. And while perhaps any extended analysis of a single historical figure will tend, from the very nature of its focus, towards a certain myopic exaggeration of its subject's importance, in Macartney's case at least wide scholarly consensus supports the idea of a lasting cultural and political legacy – as indeed Kitson and Drayton have thoroughly argued, and of which Hillemann's excerpt of Napier provides a vital example. By shaping British conceptions of China generally, it seems highly likely that Macartney also helped to shape British action towards China for generations afterwards.

But significantly, Macartney's approach to China did not develop spontaneously, and many of its ideological components, as we have seen, are already present in Nieuhof's time. And while we have already looked at several of the diplomats' textual similarities, it would be wise to take a moment here to consider one area where the differences between Macartney and Nieuhof speak as loudly. If we recall the importance that Adorno and Horkheimer place on scientism's esteem for categorization as expressive of the urge to control, then the differences in the extent of Nieuhof's and Macartney's respective taxonomies of China deserves mention.

The "Observations" vs. Nieuhof's "General Description"

Both diplomats' travelogues are organized in approximately the same manner, starting with their journals, and ending with a series of encyclopedic entries on Chinese culture and, to varying extent between the two, countryside. Nieuhof, true to his pretensions, titles this section of his text "A General Description of the Empire of China," whereas Macartney modestly proffers his "Observations." At risk of extravagance, I list each author's chapter headings here, in published order, as I find them very revealing when considered in light of each author's text overall. Macartney's, which are briefer, read:

Manners and Character
Religion
Government
Justice
Property
Population
Revenue
Civil and Military Ranks and Establishments
Trade and Commerce
Arts and Sciences
Navigation
Hydraulics
Navigation
Chinese Language

By contrast, Nieuhof's (with any subheadings listed in parentheses) read:

I. Of the Government and several Chief Officers in China
II. Of the Characters, Language, Writing, and Literature of the Chinese: And in what manner the Learned in China arrive to the several Degrees of Knowledge
III. Of Several Chinese Handicraft-Trades, Comedians, Juglers, and Beggars
IV. Of some Strange Customs, Fashions and Manners, in use amongst the Chinese
V. Of their Ceremonies, and manner of Burials; and of their Tombs or Monuments
VI. Of the Form, Shape, and Make of the Body, and the Fashion of their Clothes
VII. Of some Superstitious Customs, Fashions, and other Errors in use amongst the Chinese
VIII. Of several Sects in China: Concerning Philosophy, and Idol-Worship
IX. Of Idol Temples
X. Of Towers and Sea-Marks (Triumphal arches)
XI. Of Rivers, Channels, High-Ways, Bridges, Ships, &c (Common Ways; Bridges or Sluces; Of Ships; The Courts of the Governers of the Provinces)
XII. Of Rivers, Waterfalls, Lakes, &c (Of Water-Shoots and Great Falls of Water; Of Springs, Wells, and Fountains)
XIII. Of Hills and Mountains
XIV. Of Mines of all sorts, as Metals, Stones, &c
XV. Of Roots, Herbs, Flowers, Reeds, Trees, and Fruits (Of Flowers; Of Reeds; Of Trees; Of Fruits
XVI. Of Animals (Of Four-footed Creatures; Of fowl; Of Fish; Of Creeping Creatures; Of Vermine)
XVII. Of some things more than Natural, and Strange Pools
XVIII. Of the Chinese Kings and Emperors, which have Govern'd in China before and since Christ's Birth
XIX. Of the last Chinese and Tartar War, wherein the Tartars over-ran and conquer'd the whole Empire of China

By comparing these lists, we can compare how the two authors prioritized otherwise disparate aspects of their experiences in China, and assembled these into a textual whole intended as representative of its subject. That our diplomats did intend these sections of their texts as representative summaries of China is clear enough. Nieuhof, as we have seen, titles his notes a “General Description,” and presents them as an educational primer in just the manner suggested by his magnificent introduction, with its insertion of the author into a romanticized scholarly tradition. But Macartney, too, despite his more circumspect title, is dedicated to selling his “Observations” as objective, and he follows them with the definitive claim that while he “may have seen neither so well, nor so much” as previous travellers to China, that yet he has “made it a point most faithfully to represent and report” (250) all that he *did* see. Continuing, he ends the “Observations” with an assertion of its value that appeals to virtuous impartiality, figuring his travelogue as the textual analogue of a naturalist painting or textbook image: “the fancy of the painter has intruded nothing into the picture that did not appear to him in the original from which he drew. He meant neither to embellish nor disfigure, but solely to give as just a resemblance as he could” (250). This was, of course, the de facto stance of any travelogue in the premodern era – but that rather underscores, than not, the rhetorical cache of such appeals to scientific objectivity.

And what do we find in these objective “pictures” of China? The difference between the two diplomats is stark. Nieuhof is considerably more concerned with China's natural resources than Macartney, and his seven chapters on Chinese species and land features never fail to mention their cultural significance and uses to the local inhabitants. Examples here are almost too numerous to mention. Many are quite concise, but many others are exceptionally detailed. Nieuhof says of the “best Root of China”:

> [T]here is of two sorts, the true and counterfeit, yet both natural; the true grows near to [Liping], and in other places the counterfeit, or, to speak more properly, the wild Root, and is that which is brought generally into Europe: It is of a reddish colour within, but neither so big, nor of so great Vertue as the true, which grows and increases under Ground, almost in the manner of Potatoes in India, and especially in old Pine-tree Woods, from whence they say this Root proceeds, first of all from the Gum or Juice of the Pine-tree, which falling upon the Ground, takes Root, and brings forth an Herb, which by degrees spreads itself upon the Earth, and grows under Ground with knotty Roots, in shape, bigness, and colour, not unlike Indian Coco-Nuts, but thinner and softer, which they use in several Medicines. The Root was first known in Europe in the Year 1535, when the Chinese brought the same to be sold in the City of Goa in India; and although the like Root may grow in other parts of India, as also in

> the West-Indies, yet it is much inferior in goodness to that of the East; the best whereof is tasteless, heavy, sound, and firm.
>
> This Root has a particular Vertue, according to the relation of Garcias, for the cure of the Spanish Pox, and is soveraign against Itch, Tremblings, Aches, Gout, etc. It is also very good for a weak Stomach, Headache, the Stone in the Bladder proceeding from Cold. (213)

Nieuhof goes on from there to discuss, in equal depth, further virtues of the root; and how, exactly, it is prepared as a medicine; and how it is consumed by the Indians and the Chinese; and etc. For the purposes of this thesis, however, the description is most important for what it reveals about Nieuhof's general approach to Chinese flora: that it must be considered within the context of Chinese culture. For while Nieuhof details the areas where the root grows at length, and even relays speculation of its originating from pine resin droppings, ultimately, he is most concerned with the root's uses to the Chinese. Similarly, his discussion of tea spans three pages, includes an illustration, and details all of: the plant itself, where it is grown, how it is grown, how it is harvested, how it is consumed, its medicinal properties, and the differences between Chinese and Japanese methods of brewing it (215-217). Foregrounded in such passages is a portrayal of the Chinese living in direct relationship with a specific landscape and array of local natural resources. This is what Nieuhof means when he says, at the beginning of his 12th chapter, “On Rivers”: “Having spoken at large of the chiefest things which the Hand or Industry of mortal Man has produc'd, we shall now proceed to particularize such things wherewith Nature has abundantly funish'd the Chinese out of her rich Store” (203). Understanding the Chinese, for Nieuhof, means understanding the Chinese landscape, and even its nonhuman milieu, with whom they are always depicted in relation.

And while Macartney's journal's descriptions of, say, Chinese agricultural methods sometimes rise to Nieuhoffian levels of detail, he doesn't devote a single chapter of his “Observations” to any such topics.[57] His “Observations” of China, though touching on Chinese gardening, for example, (which probably speaks more to his personal interests than anything else) overwhelmingly emphasize the cultural; as if he identifies a distinction between the land and its inhabitants that Nieuhof does not. Perhaps he thought the descriptions of Chinese terrain in his journal, together with the illustrations provided by his draughtsman, would be sufficient to evoke the Chinese countryside in the minds of readers who would have been familiar with chinoiserie designs. The idea doesn't quite

57. For example, his discussion of local farming methods in Kiangsi (136-137).

satisfy, but chinoiserie was a well established decorative aesthetic by the late 18th century, and Macartney does directly refer to it once in his journal, noting that near the city of Tchin-chien the landscape “almost realises the extravagant paintings of China fans and screens” he has seen in Britain (230). But surely Macartney's odd neglect of the land in what he offers as a general treatment of China boils down to more than presumed audience familiarity, or mere whim, especially given how often his journal treats Chinese methods of working the land. How do we make sense of this?

Given Macartney's damning assessment of the Qing court's policy towards science education, and yet frequent (and not unironic) attempts to purloin ingenious Chinese technologies; perhaps, in light of this, it isn't straining credibility to see in Macartney's natureless “Observations” evidence of an underlying opinion hinted at elsewhere in his text: that China the countryside – that endless reservoir of potential commodities that the British crown had so coveted, and for so long – does not essentially belong to the Chinese who inhabit it. Macartney's “Observations,” in both its chaptering and content, quarantines Chinese culture from its natural setting, even when addressing such things as Chinese agriculture – which he does by airily and vaguely referring the reader to notes scattered elsewhere throughout his journal (241). He does not foreground, as Nieuhof does, the Chinese' relationship to their lands at any point in his “Observations,” and shows none of the Dutchman's interest in China's natural features. His “Trade and Commerce” chapter, for instance, discusses commodities with no reference to the extraction of raw materials. Aside from a footnote about Kiangnan brown cotton (which “loses its original colour in two or three generations” [230] when transplanted in Canton), this chapter is strictly economic. By contrast with Nieuhof's “General Description,” Macartney's “Observations” portrays China as a people *and* a place, not a people *in* a place. Formally, his “Observations” divest the Chinese of their lands – a distinctly imperialistic gesture, even if only a small, symbolic one.

But small symbolic gestures too count for something, especially in an appendix meant to flesh out and complement the journal to which it was attached. De-located, the China of Macartney's “Observations” is as decontextualised as a specimen on a plate: the distillation of a people to its most general elements. And that is just one of many instances of the scientism that informs *An Embassy to China* – the record of one of the most influential and debated of British diplomats, and a crucial volume of the history of Sino-British relations. And though Nieuhof's travelogue too is, as we have seen, a scientistic work, it is notable how much severer Macartney's is in comparison. *An Embassy to China*,

relative to Nieuhof's *An Embassy from the East India Company* is astonishingly cynical: habitually concerned with recording China's commodities, profitable techne, and military vulnerabilities; and insistent on depicting the Qing rulers as usurpers somehow wholly ignorant of science, and yet clever enough to be jealous of their subjects' potential discovery of the superiority of European wares. And though it does display moments of sympathy for or wonder at the Chinese, these qualities in no wise counterbalance its pervasive grimness – or temper the severity of its scientistically inflected imperial aggression.

Chapter Five: Houckgeest, A Lighter Shade of Imperialism

Properly introducing A. E. van Braam Houckgeest's *An Authentic Account of the Embassy of the Dutch East India Company to the Court of the Emperor of China, in the Years 1794 and 1795,* means starting things off, unexpectedly, with a pirate story. As George R. Loehr (1938) explains: “In 1798, as a result of the Jay Treaty with Great Britain, a state of undeclared naval warfare existed between France and the United States,” one consequence of which was that the French Directoire “authorized the use of privateers to prey on American shipping” (186). And prey the privateers did, on any number of ships whose stories do not cross into the current thesis – and one whose story does. A ship whose freight just happened to include 500 freshly minted copies of the first full volume of Houckgeest's travelogue – what has come to be known as the “Philadelphia edition” – a French translation of Houckgeest's original Dutch manuscript by the Philadelphia-based Médéric Louis Élie Moreau de Saint-Méry. These books were smuggled to France, where most were subsequently lost to history. But not before an enterprising Parisian printer named Garnery “pirated the first volume of the Philadelphia edition, bringing out its contents in two octavo volumes” (186). Further pirated translations quickly followed from this “Paris edition,” including R. Phillips' London-published English translation (1798), upon which my thesis is based (186-187). Houckgeest, incidentally, was never able to make any reclamation against this piracy (Duyvendak, 103).

Phillips' “London edition” has become the predominant English language translation of Houckgeest's travelogue, and if any other English translations are available, they have done a fine job hiding from me. And this is unfortunate, because Phillips' book, as the

preceding story relates, misses out the entire second volume of the Philadelphia edition of Houckgeest's travelogue – which was the only edition ever actually sanctioned by Houckgeest himself.[58] Phillips' London edition follows Garnery's Paris edition in splitting its single original volume into two smaller, octavo volumes, and for the remainder of this thesis any mentions of volumes I or II will refer to these octavo volumes. Luckily, there is plenty to read and analyse just within the London edition: it spans more pages than either of Nieuhof's or Macartney's entire travelogues, considered separately; or roughly as many pages as Nieuhof's and Macartney's travelogues *together*, if Kircher's excerpts are dropped from the former.[59] This is remarkable given that the rare second volume of the Philadelphia edition apparently contained a further 205 pages of journal, as well as a great variety of supplementary material (Duyvendak, 104). To my knowledge, however, the second volume of the Philadelphia edition, besides being exceedingly difficult to procure, is not available in English – and as there is nothing else I *can* say about it, I must here sadly leave it aside.

The paratexts

R. Phillips' 1798 English translation of Houckgeest's *An Authentic Account* finds the diplomat's journal embedded, like a gem in a Baroque setting, within an elaborate, even fussy assortment of paratexts that provide its intended context. Its paratextual extravagance is in fact what most immediately distinguishes Houckgeest's work, at the formal level, from the previous two travelogues we have examined. On that basis, I have decided to consider them in a section of their own before turning to his text proper. In their myriad ways, each of these paratexts contributes to Houckgeest's overall image as a man of scientific mind and disposition.

Volume I of the travelogue contains most of the travelogue's paratextual material: firstly, an “Advertisement to the Reader” from Houckgeest's English publisher; secondly, Houckgeest's dedication to the United States' then-sitting president, George Washington; thirdly, the “Advertisement to the Editor,” a pointed mini-biography of Houckgeest originally written in French by Saint-Méry; fourthly, Houckgeest's “Introduction”; fifthly, a “Notes” section that combines a glossary of Chinese terms, concepts, and places, with a few

58. Loehr (186-187); Duyvendak (103-105).

59. My maths here are based on my specific editions of Nieuhof and Macartney, as detailed in their respective chapters. But my point is merely to indicate that Houckgeest's full travelogue was considerably larger than Nieuhof's or Macartney's.

miscellaneous observations on the culture and climate; and finally, an “Itinerary” that gives the dates for the locations Houckgeest *et al.* visited in China.

Formally displaced from its cousins, but performing a similar rhetorical function, volume II of Houckgeest's travelogue also contains a notable paratext, subsequent to the journal proper and closing out the English edition: the curious “Notice of a Collection of Chinese Drawings.” The “Notice” is a minutely detailed description of the numerous drawings of China and its inhabitants – human and non – made under Houckgeest's direction during his mission, which was published in lieu of the drawings themselves (which were at that time on display in Philadelphia). There is no such thing as an incidental paratext; the considerable forethought put into producing and ordering those attending Houckgeest's commissioned journal demand scrutiny for their individual and cumulative rhetorical functions relative to Houckgeest's text. It is with them, then, that we shall begin our reading of Houckgeest's travel tome, before moving on to his journal itself.

Houckgeest's travelogue begins with London publisher R. Phillips' “Advertisement of the English Publisher,” a formal, if largely perfunctory document that accomplishes three goals with businesslike efficiency. Firstly, it affirms the value of Houckgeest's observations (“an acceptable and valuable addition to the existing knowledge relative to an Empire, the extent and antiquity of which render it an almost exhaustless subject of information and curiosity” [vol. I, iii]); secondly, it affirms the quality of its translation from the French (effected by an unnamed “Gentleman of approved talents” whose previous “long residence in France has rendered incapable of the blunders that almost always deform books translated from the French tongue into ours” [vol. I, iii]); and lastly, it offers a brief explanation of the rationale behind the placement of certain paratexts (e.g. the placement of the glossary-containing “Notes” at the beginning of volume I for reader ease [vol. I, iii]). These functions are not themselves unusual, but do attest to the level of care taken in the presentation of Houckgeest's travelogue. And without demanding too much more of such a slight handful of paragraphs, the “Advertisement of the English Publisher,” with its brisk confirmation of the high ability and reliability of all the parties involved in the production of Houckgeest's travelogue, can certainly be seen as consonant with what will become *An Authentic Account's* overriding paratextual motif: the credibility of the text, as evinced by the scientific disposition of the author.

We find this sentiment also budding in Houckgeest's brief dedication, which follows the “Advertisement.” Written to the first president of the United States, George Washington, the dedication, in advertising Houckgeest's national alliances, serves as a

convenient summary of the principles with which he meant to associate his literary endeavour – a point that becomes especially clear when we remember that the United States had nothing to do with the embassy to which Houckgeest had become attached. On the contrary, Houckgeest's embassy's was bankrolled by the VOC (whose name after all is right in the title). He opens the dedication with a swooping circumlocution describing the Chinese as “the most ancient peoples which now inhabits this globe, and which owes its long existence to the *system* [emphasis mine]” kindly superintended by the “Father of the National Family,” the emperor. I find it significant that Houckgeest frames his very first description of China as the consequence of a brilliant “system” (v) – not the flowering of a particular nature, but rather, of the adherence to a rational organization of government – which he then approvingly compares to that of his own adopted country, the US.[60] At a time when essentialised notions of racial difference were becoming widespread, Houckgeest's attribution of the success of the Chinese empire to an ingenious social invention was perhaps more radical than it might today seem.[61] Nor does this require asking more of Houckgeest than he intended: to liken the US at the optimistic beginning of its independence with history's longest-reigning empire was more than the adulation of an idealistic new citizen, or fawning political fanboy. Equating the rationalistic, Enlightenment-era principles that were given to undergird America's political foundation with the longevity, stability, and wealth of the Chinese empire (vi), Houckgeest betrays, in his travelogue's literal first pages, an ideological orientation that we have seen before associated with scientism. One that will structure, across his journal, his observations of the late Qing empire, its environs, its conventions, and its peoples. And finally, I have mentioned that Houckgeest makes his dedication to the head of his adopted nation, despite his having travelled in a Dutch embassy: this international gesture positions his travelogue not only as a gift from one Western nation to another, but a gift comprised specifically of knowledge of China. It offers up China as a specimen for Western study; a trope we have already seen in Nieuhof and Macartney's encyclopedic approaches to especially the latter sections of their own journals.

Following Houckgeest's dedication is the “Advertisement of the Editor” – a

60. Duyvendak speaks at length of Houckgeest's association with the Washingtons; he obtained permission from George to make his book's dedication to him, and seems to have gifted Martha a porcelain set on his return from diplomatic duties in Canton (101).

61. Blue: “By the nineteenth century, ideas about differences in the genetically determined capacities of different peoples was taking on widespread theoretical importance in European intellectual culture...” and it had begun to become a common place that the cultural inferiority of the non-white races, as this was variously construed, could be traced back to differences “at the natural, biological level, in human racial distinctions which could be attested scientifically” (78).

fascinating work of marketing-qua-biography produced by the controversial pen of Houckgeest's French language translator and original editor, M.L.E. Moreau de Saint-Méry. Saint-Méry, for reasons that will presently become clear, deserves some review in his own right. A French scholar and statesman of uneven fortune, Saint-Méry is best known today for helping found the Museum of Paris, ardently defending the institutions of segregation and slavery, and for several flights to and from France as he fell out of favour with various governments.[62] But perhaps his most enduring textual legacy is a French treatise he wrote, the notorious *Description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue.* This work, which intended to encyclopedize the island of Saint Domingue (later Haiti), prominently featured, as a series of strict categories, the differentiation between Saint-Domingue's black islanders and white colonialists to the most minute fraction of miscegenation. Tracing back heritage seven generations, his system encompassed an astonishing 128 different combinations in all. Doris Garraway's (2005) research on his "systematic classification of human variety in the colonies," describes it as "unprecedented in its scope and detail" (1). And while Garraway's specific interest is in Saint-Méry's text as a projection of white colonial sexual desire and reproductive ideology in a time of rapidly shifting island demographics, she usefully delineates the scientistic aspects of the work:

> The publication in 1797 of... Saint-Méry's *Description topographique...* represented a milestone in Enlightenment racial theory... Expanding on previous taxonomies of De Pauw and Hilliard d'Auberteuil, and borrowing from eighteenth-century innovations in algebra and statistics, Moreau devised an exhaustive tabular, arithmetic and narrative typology of 'nuances of the skin' along a continuum between white and black. Comprising nearly twenty pages, this attempt to delineate and classify human color variation in the colony of Saint-Domingue represented much more than an experiment in Enlightenment rationality or the science of amalgamation. By meticulously theorising the genealogical progression between black and white, Moreau de Saint-Méry fixated on the one difference that carried political consequences in Saint-Domingue—that between white and non-white, or "sang-mêlé" (mixed-blood)." (1)

There is no evidence of Saint-Méry being a direct influence upon Houckgeest's thinking or travelogue; Duyvendak, in fact, finds his French translation remarkably faithful to Houckgeest's manuscript (5). Nonetheless, Saint-Méry's obsession with the quantification

62. Doris Garraway describes how Saint-Méry "took a leading role in the pre-revolutionary assemblies in Paris as a spokesperson for the colonial elite, arguing polemically against mulatto rights and the proposals of the Société des Amis des noirs" (228).

of racial purity does, even if incidentally, and despite the commonplaceness of such concerns during his day, provide a notable example of the various ways in which (purportedly) scientific methodology can be twisted to suit the aims of wholly unrelated ideologies. And demonstrating the superiority of the white race was common among these – notably in the 19th century, but beginning much earlier.

Saint-Méry, that is, and unfortunately, was not extraordinary in his biases. For instance, describing 18th century writers Edward Long and Charles White, Adas notes that both authors "sought to give scientific respectability to their discourses on African or "Negro' inferiority" by appropriating scientific language and methods (e.g. dubious exercizes in comparative anatomy), explaining, "Long and White demonstrated what potent weapons allegedly scientific investigations and findings might be in arguing the case for white superiority" (77). Although he doesn't originate them in scientism, Blue too notes the Enlightenment-era roots of those "notions of despotism, paganism, and the 'unnatural' [that] came to be commonly applied to China in the latter half of the eighteenth century," alongside "the emerging idea of innate racial character that would come into greater prominence in the following century" (75-78). Pseudo-scientific works of blatant racism like Saint-Méry's help put the lie to any idea of a truly impartial scientific endeavour, untainted by the prejudices, consciously held or not, of the scientist. A point that Saint-Méry illustrates too well to leave unmentioned, given my focus on scientism's capacity to both accommodate political goals, and obscure them behind the halo of its own presumed nobility of intent.

Saint-Méry's personal shortcomings aside, his painstaking "Advertisement" performs an important rhetorical function in framing Houckgeest's text by introducing the man himself and providing what is effectively his *curriculum vitae*. It is essential to the paratextual framework of Houckgeest's travelogue, and it begins, significantly, with an homage to the importance of integrity in travel writers:

> The more distant the Regions which the Traveller describes, the more they differ in their moral and physical nature from the nations for whose instruction and gratification he destines his observations, the more important it is to the reader to know in what degree his confidence is due to the man that speaks to him. (vol. I, vii)

We will not be surprised at Saint-Méry's casual assumption of a profound "moral and physical" difference between the earth's peoples. But beyond this, Saint-Méry makes clear

that travelogues – the one he prefaces, certainly – are not meant as mere entertainment, but for the “instruction” of their readers. There is something of the flavour of Nieuhof here, and the grand company of history's perambulating scholars with which that diplomat opens his own travelogue. But what is implicit in Nieuhof, Saint-Méry makes very plain: the character of the travelling author is of the utmost importance, for if he is to inhabit the role of a teacher, he must show that he is up to the task. And this is especially true regarding China; as Saint-Méry goes on to explain:

> It is particularly in respect to China that the Fear of receiving productions of an imagination more or less fertile for a true recital is easily awakened. That immense Empire is so little known; the prejudices of its inhabitants, or rather the wisdom of its government, has thrown so many obstacles in the way of those Europeans who might feel a desire to penetrate into the country in order to satisfy their curiosity and to examine what imperfect and hasty sketches have given them a faint idea of, that if it is easy to give imaginary details for certain facts, it is at the same time difficult to secure a true relation, from the existing distrust, which puts the Reader upon his guard against the Narrator.
>
> Accordingly, to expect always extraordinary things from a Traveller who speaks of China, and to doubt his veracity merely because he relates things which seem extraordinary – is the disposition of mind of those, who read any thing written concerning that astonishing country. (vol I., viii)

This meta-commentary on the state of European knowledge of China deserves close attention, given as it is in a text that has just been designated for public, and not merely academic, consumption. A number of things stand out immediately: for instance, that at the time of Saint-Méry's writing, circa 1798, it was commonly presumed that China was vastly different from any European nation. But China was paradoxically also, owing to its infamous reluctance to permit outsiders within its borders – which policy Saint-Méry sarcastically deems “the wisdom of its government” – a largely speculative construct. The entire passage resounds with the implied hunger of a broad audience for “certain facts” of the East's great “astonishing country.”

I am reminded here of Rubiés and Ollé's assertion that “despite... diversity and complexity, what makes it possible” by the premodern period to discern a coherent European travel writing genre, is not merely these texts' common basis in “the personal experience and observations of one or more travellers,” but also an underlying “claim to scientific authority through experience” (5-6). A claim that Rubiés and Ollé argue “made it possible for the genre to function as a central element in the development of a European

Republic of Letters" (5-6). Rubiés and Ollé do not mean that only men of science were trusted as observers of exotic places and peoples, but rather, that empiricism, as a cornerstone of Western science, was essential to the European travel writer's role as a reporter of, in Saint-Méry's words, "certain facts." Saint-Méry's "Advertisement" echoes and corroborates this view: by Houckgeest's writing in the late 18th century, the importance of the travel writer's observations being based on first-hand experience was well-established enough to deserve, and even apparently require, direct acknowledgement. The travelogue was not a mere memoir, it was, at least in theory, a valid tool by which to add to the pool of knowledge on a place, a people. It was a tool for "instruction." A fact which ought always to be kept in mind when reading State-sanctioned journals like Houckgeest's (and Nieuhof's and Macartney's); from the outset, such texts were framed as works of reconnaissance – records simultaneously of and for the imperial gaze.

Saint-Méry's "Advertisement" is also useful as a barometer of European familiarity with, if not China itself, then rumours of China – an indication of how large China loomed in the European imagination. Indeed, his claim that suspicion is the natural "disposition of mind" of any reader of travel accounts of China can't help but impress the modern reader with its casual cynicism. As Rubiés and Ollé, and Odell too, constantly stress, textual claims to veracity were a travel writing trope from the genre's inception – empty stylistic formality rather than trustworthy commentary in a medium rife with plagiarism and fiction (Rubiés and Ollé, 5; Odell, Soul of Transactions). But after all, and as I must continue to stress, the actual truthfulness of Houckgeest's text is immaterial here; my focus is on its ideological foundations. And Saint-Méry's preface, whatever its factuality, is aimed squarely at establishing Houckgeest's reliability as a narrator: a quality Saint-Méry gives in scientistic terms. He goes to great pains to do so, specifying Houckgeest's "rational curiosity which seeks to penetrate into mysteries under which it imagines useful truths to lie concealed"; and attributing to him possession of "that sentiment so natural to a European, of wishing to acquire further knowledge of a nation of which the little already known furnishes matter of so much well-founded astonishment" (x). The scientistic inflection of "rational curiosity," and of "penetrating... mysteries" to arrive at "useful truths" is blatant enough – but given my interest in what Houckgeest's travelogue might reveal about premodern European mindsets, I will also note that Saint-Méry rather helpfully identifies the desire to penetrate China's mysteries as a *pan-European* trait. With the breezy hyperbole that characterises his "Advertisement" as a whole, he avers of Houckgeest: "Never, I will venture to assert, did a foreigner leave China... with so many

testamonies to his veracity" (vol I., xii). Houckgeest's text, if we are to take Saint-Méry at his sterling word, is pure; as honest and impartial as a scientific work.[63]

But besides being merely a work of "rational curiosity," Houckgeest's text was also openly a work of imperialism. Saint-Méry explains:

> The narrative of his journey can even be considered, in some degree, as an official account of the Dutch Embassy, since having been submitted to the persons belonging to that Embassy, it did not afford them the least room for criticism, and since the Ambassador himself took copies of it, with a view of sending them to the Regency in Batavia, and to the Prince Stadtholder. (vol. I, xii)

It would not be outrageous to hear echoes here of Drayton's research on the cosy relationship between British science and empire, transposed into a Dutch key. Passed through ambassador Isaac Titsingh's hands for inspection, and given his stamp of approval as the official record of the embassy's doings in China, Saint-Méry positions Houckgeest's travelogue as a sanctioned imperialist gesture before the author's own account even begins. It is a scientific survey of a foreign land and people, conducted by and for not just the VOC, but the Dutch generally (as the reference to the Prince Stadtholder makes clear) – if not, in fact, for the West *tout court.* And though Duyvendak reminds us that "The Dutch assumed that they merely represented a trading-company, and could not be regarded as representatives of a foreign monarch, as was the case of Macartney and Amherst" (1), he explains that this made no difference anyway to the Chinese, who so little understood Dutch government that embassies as early as Nieuhof's had to reference an imaginary "King of Holland" to be permitted to function as emissaries at all (1-2). Additionally, it seems strange that, if Houckgeest did not want to be compared directly to Macartney's literally imperialistic embassy, he should have included mention of it in his title, which in full includes that it was "Subsequent to that of the Earl of Macartney," (though this may have been the decision of the publisher). Regardless, even were we to allow that Houckgeest's work was not commissioned by the Dutch Republic so much as the VOC specifically, it is still true that his dedication to George Washington openly posits his text as a work at the very least *for* a Western nation.

63. Kent, too, if much less effusively than Saint-Méry (a designation which, to be fair, applies to most), is careful to note in his "Van Braam Houckgeest, Early American Collector" (1930) that Houckgeest was of a constitutionally curious and scholastic nature, writing of Houckgeest's time working in Canton that "[b]esides his work, Van Braam devoted himself systematically to the study of the country and its people in all their aspects" (163).

Saint-Méry then explains of the companion drawings to Houckgeest's text, that “a collection... [was] exposed for several months at Philadelphia to the view of all amateurs of the sciences” (vol. I, xiii). Saint-Méry's “amateur” is unrelated to the well-meaning but bumbling novice conjured by modern utterances of the word. Saint-Méry, rather, hearkens back to the word's Latin origin, which denotes merely a “lover” of something – in this case, science. Science here employed to translate China and its endemic cultures into a neat set of quantifiable variables – and this despite Saint-Méry's later claim that Houckgeest's journal was not “undertaken with a view to reason upon China in a systematic manner, but to give an account of what [Houckgeest] met with and perceived... It is simple facts that he relates” (vol. I, xv). And in fact, Houckgeest's *is* the least systematic of the travelogues included in our current study. Nevertheless, Saint-Méry's disavowal of Houckgeest's text as a studied assessment of China is not to be taken at face value. Rhetorically, it is a cleverly roundabout way to vouch for the author's impartial purity of observation: because Houckgeest “cannot be supposed or expected to reduce facts to an agreement with any particular opinions,” (vol. I, xv) he can be relied upon for unbiased and “simple facts” – that is, *truth.*

Houckgeest claims as much for himself in his formal introduction. Therein, he describes his own journal, frankly, confidently, and redundantly, as a “constant depository of truths, represented with the most strict regard to truth” (vol. I, xix). Over a century after Nieuhof, and longer still since the establishment of its first European-seeded Christian communities, China-the-vast yet contained areas which, Houckgeest explains with something near surprise, “never yet were marked with the footstep of a European, and where his inquisitive eye never yet had an opportunity of making the smallest observation” (xvii). Houckgeest's superlative – “the smallest observation” – is tangy with presumption. There is something ethnocentric in his jealousy to describe China with “scrupulous precision” (vol. I, xix) for Western eyes. “I made a point with myself,” he declares, “of committing to paper, with the least possible delay, every thing I should see and observe, in order that I might give a faithful description of it to my countrymen” (vol. I, xvii).[64]

64. The visual emphasis of Houckgeest's phrasing is intense: “see and observe.” In the second volume of his journal, after finally reaching the imperial palace, he invokes the purity of his gaze once again, to assure his readers of the truthfulness of a comparison he has just made between an imperial chamber in which his company was dined and “a guard house in our own country” (vol. I,192). The shade-throwing is exquisite: “The picture will perhaps accord ill the brilliant accounts that the Missionaries have sent to Europe of this capital... but I paint what I see, and what (I repeat it again) I so little expected to see, that nothing but my own eyes could have convinced me of its reality” (vol.I, 192). In his effort to prove the empirical honesty of his observations, Houckgeest does not hesitate to call missionary honesty into question. His remark here also recalls Macartney's invocation of painting as a metaphor for his own observations (*An Embassy to China*, 250).

Houckgeest's scientistic gaze is tied to imperialism by a sense of obligation – but to whom? Who are his countrymen? He has by now name-checked both Europe and the United States (vol. I, xvii), and owes allegiances to both; a broad swath in an age swarming with empires large and small, and especially notable coming from a globe-hopping Dutchman called once again to work in the employ of his motherland. His paratextual ambiguity seems to hint that his ultimate loyalty is to a “West” apparently more distinguishable for its being not-China, than for any positive characteristics of its own. And indeed, much later, in his journal itself, he eventually settles the matter. Having boasted of the particular esteem in which Qianlong held the Dutch above all other Europeans, Houckgeest enthuses that this special favour will provide his embassy the “opportunity of seeing things that no foreigner as yet [has] ever beheld. Our desire to enlighten Europe by our observations on what is most remarkable in China made this information highly agreeable” (vol. I, 203).[65] Intended to “enlighten Europe,” but dedicated to the American president, what the paratexts suggest, then, Houckgeest's journal confirms: that his observations were an act of fact-finding; the pivoting of a great generic Western eye towards China.

Houckgeest of course was hardly the first Dutchman with such pretensions – we have seen the considerable lengths to which Nieuhof went to not only contextualise his journal as a scholastic endeavour, but in his “General Description” to present his findings in the style of an encyclopedia. Nieuhof's strategy – embellished by van Meur's illustrations – paid off, and his travelogue became an institution in its own right; one whose long shadow fell directly upon Houckgeest. The younger Dutchman was naturally sensible of this, and as a consequence is quite tactical about how he positions himself versus his forebear. Favourably comparing his work to Nieuhof's, Houckgeest boasts:

> [M]y work will moreover have the merit of being entirely new, since there is not a single line borrowed from any traveller or writer whatever... It is with the sole view therefore of doing further homage to the truth, that I declare that for twenty years I had read nothing on the subject of China. Although we had with us the work of Nieuhof... I did not chuse to consult it, because I did not wish to enter into a refutation of its contents, a thing by no means impossible, and because it seemed indubitable that a century and a half must have occasioned some change in the aspect of the towns and establishments, and in the face of the country. (xx)

65. See also vol. II, where Houckgeest mentions the even more particular esteem that he himself was held in by the emperor (246-247).

Houckeest accomplishes a number of things with this pass at Nieuhof: both acknowledging the widespread esteem in which Nieuhof's text has traditionally been held, and, without directly contradicting it, implying its obsolescence. Houckgeest carefully continues to build his image as an impartial and trustworthy observer, even making the surprising move of pleading unfamiliarity with the details of Nieuhof's text so as to establish himself as untainted by the former author's influence (which, of course, only proves the opposite). To take him at his word, Houckgeest is the perfect candidate to write the travelogue with whose creation he had been tasked: a cosmopolitan, disciplined writer, of scientific disposition, unbiased by devotion to the accounts of any former explorers. The very man, it would seem, that Saint-Méry claimed he was. In light of our previous discussions of Nieuhof and Macartney, it hardly seems necessary to point out the irony in Houckgeest's attempting to establish his own objectivity by stressing the originality and purity of his observations – i.e. by invoking perhaps the single most exhausted trope in all travel literature. By avowing the unprecedented honesty, and therefore originality, of his text, Houckgeest only succeeds in proving himself a textbook example of the literary lineage from which he is so concerned to separate himself; an act which superficially stands in opposition to Nieuhof's brash auto-nomination into the company of history's great traveller-scholars, but in fact relies upon the same idealization of empirical observation.

Houckgeest ends his introduction with a *de rigueur* list of assurances and proofs of the veracity of his maps, and some notes on his choice of name translations. Most interestingly, he boasts of improving upon a Chinese map of Peking, famed for its exactness, which nevertheless did not well indicate the city's suburbs or the precincts of Yuen-ming-yuen. The latter of these imperfections, Houckgeest tells us, he “remedied, as far as my own judgment authorized me to do it, and after having seen and gone through more than three-fourths of the palace” (vol. I, xxi). The former he amends with help from a map of Du Halde's (vol. I, xxi). “Thus it was that I was able to render my topography of Pe-king more exact than in the Chinese original” (vol. I, xxi). These perhaps unexceptional seeming passages, on inspection, vividly illustrate scientism's ability to handmaiden imperialist conceits: by recourse to both his own and the faculties of another great European, Houckgeest, that gracious angel of Western learning, is able to save China from the defects of a tradition-bound and outdated cartography. His gesture was meant to, and would have resonated with barely concealed symbolism – it still does. To place his mapmaking (or rather map-improving) in its proper context, we will recall from Adas that:

> European writers frequently linked weaknesses in temporal and spatial perception to a general disregard on the part of Africans and Asians for the accuracy and precision that had come to be valued so highly in Western culture. The emphasis on experiment and empirical validation, central to the scientific approach to the material world, had resulted in the imposition of ever stricter standards of observation, measurement, testing, and recording from the seventeenth century onward. (Adas, 263)

Houckgeest's map of Peking was not the passion project of a cartographic hobbyist, but a distinctly scientistic, imperialistic act of containment. Precision was, and is, key to scientific methodology, its hallmark. So, perhaps ironically, whatever the actual exactness of Houckgeest's map, his inclusion of several name-dropping paragraphs detailing its creation and attesting its precision in an otherwise brief introduction speaks, firstly, to the incident's rhetorical importance in establishing his scientific credentials. I refer here, again, to Odell's work on the visual components of Nieuhof's text; specifically their vital role in establishing the truthfulness of the accounts to which they were connected. They literally added a new dimension to the information presented by the author, shoring up the proof of his observations, and giving them an empirical glow. Speaking of Nieuhof's great map of China, Odell could as easily be explaining Houckgeest's of Peking: “Because it is specific, particular, and related to an individual experience of travel in China, the map appears to affirm the author, Nieuhof, as an authentic traveller and to insist on the credibility of the text as the relation of an actual experience” (Soul of Transactions, 231). But moreover, and as specifically regards the entanglement of scientism with imperialism, it is also important to understand that such maps, besides acting as proofs of credible first-hand experience and scientific (e.g. cartographic) know-how, were also, as triumphs of the Western gaze, ideological victories. By translating Peking into familiar quantities, familiar measures, for a Western audience, Houckgeest's map visually and conceptually invades a foreign city, subjecting it to Western conceptual terms. If we follow Adorno and Horkheimer's thought, we know where this leads. This is the vital ideological first step towards imperial expansion – not by any means sufficient to provoke such expansion, but prerequisite for it to occur. And therefore important enough that drafting it alone was not, apparently, sufficient to exhaust its usefulness, but its creation could also be recorded in text and trumpeted as proof of the author's European ingenuity – if not, indeed, European ingenuity generally. In its way, Houckgeest's map summarizes the scientistic aims of his mission overall by demonstrating the very scientific mastery – and its potential utility to the

Chinese – that only a couple years earlier Macartney had assumed would effortlessly persuade the Chinese into freer trade with Britain. This scientism in Houckgeest is more implicit and less aggressive, but just as discernible.

Perhaps the most interesting of Houckgeest's paratexts is his “Notes” section, in which Saint-Méry helps him to clarify a miscellaneous (and quite diverse) set of names and concepts that figure in the travelogue.[66] We have seen the kin of such notes before in Nieuhof and Macartney, who (or whose publishers') placed theirs at or towards the ends of their travelogues, giving these sections the feeling of a summation – a turning out of the personal account to encompass more general observations. This movement parallels the empirical process of beginning with personal experience and inducing from it general laws. Houckgeest's notes, too, his English publisher implies, were originally intended to follow his journal. But as Mr. Phillips puts it in his “Advertisement,” since “nearly the whole of the words” explained in the “Notes,” “occur in the First Volume, this arrangement is judged to be more convenient to the Reader” (vol. I, iv). Houckgeest's notes, like Nieuhof's and Macartney's, performs a number of interesting functions. Less systematic than the other diplomats, Houckgeest arranges his notes simply in alphabetical order, a rather naive organizational method which prevents the academic feel of Nieuhof or Macartney's topical chaptering, but which perhaps makes the “Notes” less intimidating. In any case, it prevents Houckgeest's notes from competing with his journal for precedence. But it also, as discussed previously, allows Saint-Méry to make the interesting claim that the very unstudied, improvised nature of Houckgeest's composition is a testament to its truth – a sign that he is unburdened by the influence of previous writers from whom he might have otherwise been tempted to poach. His “Notes” give him an opportunity to address issues as varied as agricultural goods (e.g. “Beans”), units of measurement (“Cobido”), literary figures (“Confucius”), the presence of other Europeans in China (“Portuguese”), and even religion.[67]

This latter category in fact makes for a good case study of the limitations of

66. George R. Loehr: “There is a section of Notes, which explain names and terms that appear in the text. It is especially here that one realises the great contribution of Moreau de Saint-Méry, who was far more than a mere translator...” and whose efforts were “able definitely to place a scholar's stamp on the work” (184).

67. Houckgeest, surprisingly, makes no particular critique of the fact that “Cobido” referred to three different measures: the Mandarin's, the merchant's, and the carpenter's, as he gives it. Adas notes that the plasticity of the *li* was a bugbear to many European commentators (262-263). In fact, it was a widespread 19th century complaint that the Chinese' pitiable scientific deficiency was a result of a “disregard... for accuracy in any form,” a sentiment that underscores just how important precise quantification was to the European as a proof of scientific mastery (Adas, 265). Note also, for comparison, Macartney: “The Chinese could not venture to depend on the calculations of their own people, as they are known to be never quite accurate, and to be often, indeed generally, very erroneous” (232).

Houckgeest's analysis. According to the diplomat:

> The primitive religion of China is that of the ancient patriarchs, such as Abraham, Melchisedeck, etc... The second sort of religion, adopted long after the first, and consequently when the Chinese were already embodied into a regular nation, is Idolatry, and Idolatry carried to such a length, that every one is free to make Gods according to his fancy, so that every head of a family has some of his own creation. (vol. I, xxxvii)

Gregory Blue claims that as early as the 14th and 15th centuries, popular travelogues such as Marco Polo's, or Sir John Mandeville's fictitious *Travels*, had circulated among European literati the notion that the Chinese knew and honoured Christian scripture (58). And while the Nestorian Stele, known to the West for some 150 years by Houckgeest's time, proves that in fact Christianity did have an early presence of some kind in China[68], the idea that it was ever widespread – much less China's original, "primitive" religion – is absurd. And certainly, casting the ancestor worship of Chinese households as expressions of mere "fancy" shows just how limited understandings of endemic Chinese traditions were to Houckgeest at least, and the West in general. There is nothing sensational about Houckgeest's misunderstanding; it was not likely an intentional misrepresentation. But his verdict is delivered with the conviction of certainty, and underwritten by the great pains he (and Saint-Méry) have taken to establish his unerring credibility as an observer of Chinese culture. No qualifications of his impartiality are ever made in the paratexts accompanying his journal; no mention of the possibility that, as a Westerner, his understanding of the Chinese might be biased.

It would be wrong, of course, to push upon Houckgeest modern worries about the fallout of ethnocentricity. But we will remember that the diplomat oddly celebrates how little he has read previously on China. Granted, he had lived and, as an agent of the VOC, worked in China for years in Canton previously, and so clearly would have been familiar with many aspects of Chinese culture. But given that he has made the state of his familiarity (i.e. lack thereof) with popular literary works on China a talking point, we might expect him to address the reasonable complaint that this gap in study might handicap his interpretive ability, especially regarding the various fine details of Chinese ritual (and other) practice. Houckgeest, however, never hedges the accuracy of his observations; as we have seen, he even boasts in his "Introduction" of the "scrupulous precision" to be found in

68. As Kircher relates in Part I, Chapter I of the abridged *China Illustrata* appended to Nieuhof's travelogue as "An Appendix: or Special Remarks taken at large out of Athanasius Kircher's Antiquities of China" (319).

“the details” – not otherwise qualified – that he “present[s] to the Public” (vol. I, xix). So when we find, subsequently, that his assessments are distorted by Western presumption – and this, again, despite prior experience living in Canton – it is worthwhile to consider how these distortions may have originated.

The scientism underlying Houckgeest's observations, although not directly responsible for his insistence on, in this case, the Abrahamic origins of Chinese religion, did not prevent him from making that false attribution either. And while it may go without saying that no European record of China could possibly be expected to be correct in every particular, it nonetheless seems appropriate, given the vehemence of Houckgeest and Saint-Méry's insistence on Houckgeest's purity of analysis, to point out that the facts do not actually support his being any less beholden to the conceits of his time and culture than any other Western observer. Were this not the case, then we would have to credit Houckgeest with the transcendent objectivity that he and his translator boast of him – and would need, as well, to rethink our critique of his scientism. But even before his journal proper commences, he has already proven a fallible enough interpreter of Chinese culture that inspection of the ideological lens through which he views China seems necessary. And though it is possible that charitable modern readers might charitably draw a line between the accuracy of Houckgeest's account of his travels *as he experienced them,* and any more objective assay of Chinese culture *per se,* that is certainly not a line that the diplomat himself draws. For Houckgeest, it is the “precision” of his recollection of “even the most minute particulars” (vol. I, xix) of his journey that legitimises his commentary. But as it turns out, fallible conclusions can be wrought even from the most precisely recollected of particulars. And it is for that reason that one not only can, but must examine Houckgeest's travelogue, like all travelogues, for its hidden biases.

And respecting these biases, I will content myself to consider one last, brief example from Houckgeest's “Notes” to shore up our exegesis of this lengthy paratext. In the “Temperature” section, Houckgeest makes an extended comparison of the climates in Peking and, located at almost the same latitude, his adopted city of Philadelphia: “39 degrees 55 minutes north, and 39 degrees 56 minutes north,” respectively. “The winter is exceedingly cold and severe” in both cities, but “[t]he winter begins earlier in Pe-king” and the harshest winds come from the north rather than northwest in Philadelphia. And though water in both cities freezes at the same temperature – “before Reaumur's thermometer has fallen to the freezing point” – there is “less intensity, and still less duration in the cold at Philadelphia, than at Pe-king; since at the former city there are pretty frequently partial

thaws” (vol. I, xxxix). Houckgeest then gives some examples of particularly hot summers in both locations, before surmising that “Pe-king is at once colder and hotter than Philadelphia,” and theorising that, contrary to popular opinion, this couldn't be an effect of land clearance alone. This almost pedantic discussion of atmospheric phenomena in China and the US is yet another proof of the thoroughness and pointedly *scientific* precision of Houckgeest's commentary; one whose rhetorical success depends upon prior association between scientific methodology and truth. Like many of the examples we have considered so far, it amounts to little on its own – but considered in aggregate, such examples demonstrate incontrovertibly just how ideologically fundamental scientism was to Houckgeest's thought.

The last paratext of volume one of Houckgeest's travelogue, directly preceding his journal itself, is the “Itinerary.” It is an interesting addition to the travelogue's paratextual framework, the key to whose significance can be found in its subtitle, which ends “...serving to explain the Map inserted at the beginning of the first Volume.” Pinpointing the embassy's exact location each day of the trip, it adds a temporal specificity to Houckgeest's text intended to complement and complete the spatial specificity of his map (and other visuals). Like them, it insists upon the empirical nature of his observations by foregrounding that his account is indeed “the relation of an actual experience” (Odell, Soul of Transactions, 231). Pulled from Houckgeest's journal, its cascade of dates and places streamlines the embassy's journey into a reference guide to help prevent readers from losing imaginative track of his location amidst the swimming details of Houckgeest's prose. And so, at its most literal, it is simply a tool for ease of reading. But considered rhetorically, it is yet another buttress to Houckgeest's credibility, which performs the conceptual work of demystifying China by translating it into graspable scientific units – not sufficient proof on its own of the ideological basis of Houckgeest's travelogue, but, considered within the context of its paratextual fellows, and indeed Houckgeest's main text, an undeniable variation on an overriding theme.

Taken as a group, the habitual need to demonstrate the author's credibility is the most defining feature of Houckgeest's first volume paratexts. And everywhere within them are examples of his (and Saint-Méry's) reliance upon both semantic scientism (quantification, comparison), and thematic scientism (referencing Reamur's thermometer; theorising about causes of climate difference between Philadelphia and Peking) as the means by which this credibility can be demonstrated to his audience. In Houckgeest's as in our previously examined travelogues, scientific references both implicit and overt are

given as the vocabulary of honesty; an association that attests the romanticization of science's presumably privileged access to indisputable, factual truths. And an association that, as Adas has argued, Europeans (and their American cultural progeny) had come to see as essential to social progress (203-205).

This would certainly explain the most unusual of Houckgeest's paratexts, and the only one included in *An Authentic Account*'s second volume: the “Notice of a Collection of Chinese Drawings, in the Possession of M. Van Braam, Author of this Work.” Provided by Saint-Méry, the “Notice” is a scrupulous accounting of the various drawings made under Houckgeest's direction during the embassy's travels (which at the time of his English language publication were, as noted earlier, on show in Houckgeest's adopted home, Philadelphia). According to Saint-Méry, Houckgeest also had a hand in writing these notes, although the comparative levels of contribution are not clear. Regardless, as a support to Houckgeest's main text, which explains in detail the apparently large number and variety of illustrations produced by the embassy, the “Notice” functions similarly to the visuals themselves. It ensures the factuality of the travelogue as a whole, and, even in the absence of these visuals, provides the categorical system by which Houckgeest seems to have organized them. This is an interesting substitution, but one that make sense in light of Odell's assertion of the importance of visual media in establishing Nieuhof's – and by extension any travelogue's – authenticity. To this end, Henry Kent, adulatory to a fault in his 1930 article for the American Antiquarian Society, writes:

> Today, the traveler in strange countries carries with him, as an essential part of his equipment, a camera or a moving picture machine, with which he records what he sees, and, what is more important, verifies what he says... Our author, however, conceived a method of work which, so far as I know, was unique in the history of books. He employed two native Chinese artists, whom he kept employed for five years, to make a series of drawings of what he saw and intended to talk about, artists who, judging from what we know of other similar work, were remarkably proficient in their art. The collection consisted of thirty-eight volumes, containing about eighteen hundred drawings, with maps, charts, and plans and other drawings not included in the volumes. (172)

Kent's declaration is astounding, if not exactly for its factuality. Houckgeest was certainly not the first diplomat to employ draughtsman, nor to make the visual records of his journey – whose veracity was inevitably passionately attested to – central to his subsequent publications. Schmidt's work has made this fact abundantly clear; indeed, as it has also made clear that many of the images that did feature in published travelogues throughout

the 17th and 18th centuries were either recycled or had been ornamented by atelier editors, however they might have been marketed as the works of the author's own travelling party. But Kent's zeal here is most important in its own regard, as it encapsulates just the enthusiasm for “drawings, maps, charts, and plans” that Odell speaks of, and for just the reasons she gives of their importance to premodern travel writing generally. Kent's striking comparison of Houckgeest's visual media with the apparently more objective camera hinges upon the camera's vaunted ability to “verify” what the photographer sees. Aside from underscoring the continued importance in the early 20th century of the scientistic objectivity and accuracy of the traveller's account, Kent's testimony also pointedly identifies Houckgeest's visual media as essential evidence to his credibility as an observer. Indeed, the title of Kent's work, “Van Braam Houckgeest, An Early American Collector,” figures Houckgeest's travelogue as not a series of personal observations, but a “collection” of specimens – an array of exotic butterflies, pinned to cardboard and encased in glass. As evidence, that is, of a China that, by virtue of Houckgeest's enlightened disinterest, could only have existed as he described it. Moreover, it portrays Houckgeest's travelogue as a great service performed for the United States – a humanitarian feat which “had no small part in fixing the American public's mental picture of that strange land” (174).[69]

But there is another way in which the “Notice” establishes the scientism of Houckgeest's travelogue. Beside what it indicates about the need for visuals at all as evidence of their author's objectivity of observation, it also highlights just how important taxonomical categorical systems *per se* of Chinese phenomena were, both to Houckgeest's descriptive process, and apparently to the reading public generally as a means of making sense of China. How else do we explain that the “Notice” – a custom taxonomy of Chinese phenomena designed to organize a *specific* collection of drawings – was published finally, and with little sense of irony, in the absence of the drawings themselves? Such a cheeky manoeuvre is only comprehensible if we allow that the taxonomy in question had value in itself. And it did: as an expression of the centrality of quantification and taxonomization to Western cultural apprehension.

Houckgeest's habitual insistence upon using scientific conceptual strategies to measure, assess, and explicate China and its people, supports my overarching theorisation that scientific methodology was often used as an instrument of imperial power:

69. Interestingly, in context Kent's quote refers to both Houckgeest and Saint-Méry, who Kent seems to place on nearly the same plane as Houckgeest as creator of *An Authentic Account*.

most literally, albeit not only, as a means of imperial reconnaissance. Witness, for example, sections of the “Notice” such as “IX. Natural History: Fishes and Crustaceous Animals,” in which stock is taken of the “Two volumes containing eighty drawings, a foot long by about nine inches high, in which are drawn and coloured after nature fresh and salt-water fish, sea-snakes and eels, lobsters, and shrimps...” (vol. II, 315). It is rather unlikely that Houckgeest's interest in Chinese crustaceans was indicative of any direct VOC mandate. Rather, what we find here is that obsessive need to quantify China in terms of both human and natural resources that unites all three of our travelogues. A need, at base, to reduce China to a set of explicable, finite, and predictable factors that can only remind us of Adorno and Horkheimer's description of scientific understanding as a predicate to control. And without accusing Houckgeest of fully conscious designs upon fomenting conquest, we can still note both the amenability of his scientism – the searching thoroughness of which, if not scope, is exemplified in the “Notice's” pedantic attention to M.I.A. drawings of crabs – to imperialist reconnaissance. Not to mention the gravity with which the author undertook his literary endeavour. Houckgeest was quite aware of the at least latent imperial import of his project. He ends his introduction with the Latin, “In magnis voluisse sat est”: *To once have wanted, is enough in great deeds.* And what was his great deed? The subtext is as clear as it is familiar: to attempt, to a greater extent than perhaps any Westerner before him, to lay China bare to Western eyes. Down, even, to its shrimps and crabs.

The Journal

And it seems particularly appropriate, on that note, to finally crack open Houckgeest's journal itself. Like the two travelogues I have already examined, *An Authentic Account* is undoubtedly a scientistically influenced work – but it strikes a very different chord than Nieuhof's or Macartney's efforts. Its scientism, although shaped by the Dutch imperial[70] desire to maintain cordial trade relations with China, lacks the urgency and martial aggression of Macartney; military assessments in Houckgeest's text are more general than tactical, and do not give way to imagined conquest scenarios like they do in the work of his British contemporary. This, I think, reflects the Dutch Republic's less

70 Again, I shall continue to refer to Dutch “imperialism,” in recognition of the republic's colonial holdings and mercantilism; and more particularly in this case, the general similarities between the economic goals of Houckgeest's and Macartney's embassies (if not, as we shall see, how these goals were pursued).

fraught relationship with the Chinese.[71] It is certainly not that Houckgeest's work doesn't evince scientistic concerns with “unveiling” the Chinese (and therefore with knowledge as power in the Adornan sense) – we have heard him claim this “great deed” as a goal for himself in his introduction – but Houckgeest's aggression remains largely in this abstract, conceptual sphere.

Like Macartney, Houckgeest begins his narrative simply: at the beginning, without any Nieuhoffian grandstanding. But for all its subtlety, his approach is just as calculated. He gives the background for the embassy: while working in the Dutch Canton factory in 1794, Houckgeest was informed by a Chinese official that “his Majesty [Emperor Qianlong] was going to celebrate for the sixtieth time” his accession to the throne, and that “as the Dutch nation was one of the first established in China [as traders], the Tsong-tou [Viceroy] would feel a real satisfaction at seeing a representative of the Company attend” (2) the celebrations. Houckgeest's insistence upon Chinese titles and names establishes him immediately as familiar with the language and people; a helpful footnote at the bottom of the page refers readers to the “Notes” section earlier in the text with its glossary of these terms. The footnote was English-language publisher Phillips', not Houckgeest's; but it nonetheless underscores the importance of his paratexts, with their heavy emphasis on his credibility as an observer of Chinese culture, to his text as a whole, and in fact continues their work. But this introduction to Houckgeest's journal is also worth noting for the way it immediately portrays Houckgeest as imbricated within a larger institutional network. He is a VOC man, of implicitly established authority and ranking (as the mandarin's visit to him indicates), and his subsequent text can and should be taken as coming from the mouthpiece of Dutch economic interests. He is no missionary, nor some wide-eyed merchant ingénue experiencing the Orient for the first time. And for all that his paratexts stress to us his impartiality, we readers know, from the first pages of Houckgeest's journal, that we are dealing with a distinctly Western subjectivity, beholden to and representative of the Western, officially Dutch, ideological status quo.

Houckgeest vs. Macartney; the return of the “Lou-wa” birds

Like Nieuhof and Macartney, Houckgeest's descriptions of China and the Chinese

71. For instance, on the 21st of February he notes that “it seldom happened” that groups of above “three or four soldiers” ever emerged from the roadside guard houses in “the province of which the Emperor makes his residence” (89). Houckgeest expresses surprise that other parts of the country seem better guarded than this, but makes no further comment.

are shaped by both scientism and imperialism. But Dutch imperialism in the late 18th century was not equivalent to the British imperialism of the time; the British had eclipsed the Dutch as colonial holders and traders.[72] However, there was one quarry in particular that the British had long coveted that continued to elude them – a favourable trade balance with the Chinese. It was ultimately to rectify this situation that Macartney had sought Qianlong's audience just a year before Houckgeest's embassy. The Dutch were more modest in their goals; and enjoying, as Houckgeest's text makes clear, good standing with the Chinese to begin with, were not inclined to the ambitious but fraught designs that motivated Macartney's mission. Subsequently, Houckgeest's narrative often strikes a quite different tone than Macartney's:

> We also passed by several brick kilns situated upon the banks of the river, and perceived in the interior several pretty villages, shaded by bamboos and other trees. I prolonged my little excursion till I came opposite the city of *In-te-chen,* where, upon the eastern side, I found a handsome tower of nine stories, in good preservation, although it appeared very ancient, according, at least, to the indication of the trees growing out of the crevices of its walls, and even upon the very top of it. (48)

It is by sheer force of numbers that such throw-away bits of description accumulate to any significance in Houckgeest, who here describes his “little excursion” on Nov 26th as if he were making casual tea-time chatter in a gossipy parlour room. Houckgeest's China, as he paints it in one of the first descriptions in *An Authentic Account*, is a patch-quilt of “pretty villages,” “handsome rivers,” and delightfully decrepit buildings with greenery in their crevices – a chinoiserie room-screen. Continuing in this vein, a paragraph later he is tickled by the sight of a mountain “in the form of a sugar loaf when seen from the westward” (48). The serious-minded and scholastic observer promised to us in the travelogue's preceding paratexts seems missing in action, and in his place one of the duller Bennet sisters has been substituted. In a similar tone, he later notes “at the extremity of a high mountain, a tower which looks very heavy, and appears constructed without taste. It is octagonal and only three stories high” (57). Although the general dimensions of the tower are given, the only real description here is the vague and subjective assertion that it was constructed “without taste.” In the town of “Pak-eng-tsauy-thong,” however, “The houses stand detached from one another, and are constructed with

72. See again O'Brien, “Mercantilism and Imperialism in the Rise and Decline of the Dutch and British Economies, 1585-1815” for a detailed comparison. Also, Leonard Blusse, “No Boats to China: The Dutch East India Company and the Changing Pattern of the China Sea Trade, 1635-1690.”

a good deal of taste" (63). After all the scientistic sound and fury of the paratexts, how do we account for this unexpectedly hazy, equivocal – even flippant commentary? Houckgeest's obsession with the "tastefulness" of Chinese architecture seems to lack Macartney's sense of vehement disapproval, because Houckgeest, quite unlike the Lord George, fails ever to explain what, exactly, constitutes either good *or* bad architectural taste – a topic that Macartney rarely passes an opportunity to lecture upon. Where Macartney takes pains to justify his critiques of, say, Chinese architecture or garden design, Houckgeest simply takes for granted that his readers will understand what he refers to as their tastefulness (or lack thereof). Allowing for the possibility that Saint-Méry's translation may be partly to blame for Houckgeest's equivocality, Houckgeest seems to have considerable faith that "taste" refers to a widely understood and apparently pan-European standard. This betrays a significant ethnocentric bias to his thinking, and one that must be weighed against his often warmer disposition towards the Chinese than Macartney.

Following his "little excursion" past In-te-chen, Houckgeest and his company chance across one of the cormorant fisherman that had once so enchanted Nieuhof:

> We have this day seen one of those fisherman who neither makes use of net nor line, but employs birds trained and accustomed to pursue the fish under water. These birds seize their prey and bring it to their master. Whenever it happens that they swallow a small fish or two, the fisherman obliges them to restitution by pressing their crop, and only gives them a few small pieces for their nourishment. This singular mode of fishing is no small proof of the industry of the Chinese, especially when it is known that the invention of it belongs to one of the lower classes of the nation. (vol. I, 50)

Here are Nieuhof's "Lou-wa" birds (and their masters), as industrious as ever a century after the elder Dutchman's visit. Indeed, time seems not to have impacted the strategy of these fishermen in the slightest – which makes the comparison of Nieuhof's and Houckgeest's treatments of the phenomena especially enlightening in our given context. The authors could hardly differ more: where Nieuhof is astonished at Chinese ingenuity and immediately desirous of appropriating it, elitist Houckgeest is most impressed that "the lower classes" were able to invent such a "singular mode of fishing" to begin with. He shows no other interest in the fishermen or birds, and does not mention them again. Given that changes in Dutch fishing technology might well have, in the century between the ambassadors, progressed to the point that the novelty of fishing with cormorants could no

longer be considered clever, but merely novel; still, it is striking how nonchalant Houckgeest's description is compared to his forebear.

The Dutch touch, and much ado about kowtowing

And perhaps there is reason for this lack of aggression. My decision to analyse Houckgeest subsequent to Macartney is not just a matter of keeping to chronological order – or rather, not for the sake of chronology alone. Houckgeest was quite aware of his embassy's following so closely upon Macartney's heels, and he references the British ambassador regularly. Although he does not make comparisons in any systematic way, his mentions of the British diplomat seem to indicate a strong need to differentiate his embassy from the former's. Early in his account, for instance, Houckgeest details the Viceroy of Canton's excuse for not entertaining Dutch ambassador Titsingh:

> [The Viceroy] observed to his Excellency [Titsingh], that he was not permitted by the usages of China to receive him in his palace, nor with as much respect as he deserved, or as he (the Tsong-tou) should be happy to shew him; and that he therefore trusted, as this could not be done without infringing on the laws and customs of the country, that the Ambassador would not take it ill if he sent an excuse by one of his Mandarins to the gate of the palace, especially as the year before he had treated the English Ambassador, (Lord Macartney) in the same way (26).

This fantastic little insight into the workings of Chinese social nicety sets Houckgeest's embassy, and by way of the Viceroy of Canton's own words, on an equal footing with the British in Qing eyes. Indeed, he earlier mentions, almost offhandedly, how despite “the jealousy and hatred of certain Europeans” who had conspired to besmirch Dutch reputation amongst the Chinese, that “the Regency of Canton entertained such an opinion of the Dutch national character, and of the peaceful and sedate conduct of the individuals of our nation, as insured the success of an Embassy which had been so industriously traduced” (vol. I, 18). Ever circumspect, Houckgeest doesn't name names here, but he also pointedly refuses to clear any of the other nations with factories at Canton, suggestively leaving his allusions open-ended. But as Loehr indicates, he was in fact well aware of the shortcomings of the Macartney embassy, and determined not to repeat them:

> Grammont, a Jesuit who had been in China for twenty-six years, wrote to Agoté from Peking, giving as one of the five reasons why the Macartney embassy had

> failed, the refusal to kowtow. A copy of this letter was given Van Braam, who informed Titsingh of this fact. So the two of them determined scrupulously to comply with the request of the Chinese officials on each and every occasion. (192)

Houckgeest and Titsingh's scrupulous determination apparently paid off, with Houckgeest boasting that “I was told besides that we [the Dutch] stood very much above the English in the opinion of the sovereign,” and then immediately justifying himself, “I trust the reader will excuse [the particulars] I just related, and which my veracity forbade me to sacrifice to a false sense of shame, because I am in reality no more here than the Historian of the Embassy” (vol. I, 202). These boasts, both indirect and direct, of the esteem in which the Dutch were held helps Houckgeest to clearly establish the similarities between his own and Macartney's embassies – and, much more importantly, their differences. Given the notorious failure of Macartney's mission, this is not surprising, but it is nonetheless worth noting that Houckgeest felt the need to distance himself from his British counterpart both in the face of the Chinese, and again in a journal intended for general Western readership.

The differences between the embassies, and their goals, were after all numerous. Leonard Blussé states plainly: “The VOC court voyages had a clearly defined mercantile goal and had little to do with the propagation of national honour – a position that is in notable contrast with... the British embassy of Earl Macartney in 1793” (Peeking into the Empires, 18).[73] I disagree with Blussé inasmuch as I believe that the British felt that propagating their national honour was, in the final instance, necessary to the pursuit of their *own* clearly defined mercantile goal. We have considered this topic already, in our review of Macartney's cargo of painstakingly chosen tribute gifts. But regardless, undoubtedly the most notorious difference between Macartney's and Houckgeest's embassies was their very different attitudes towards the kowtow. Houckgeest describes it several times without a trace of Macartneyan anxiety. Read in mind of his immediate predecessor's faux pas (which, granted, it is almost impossible today not to do), Houckgeest's deadpanned first mention of the kowtow rings like a punchline: “We performed this ceremony according to the Chinese custom” (22). The undercurrent of humour here is not entirely a modern projection. Houckgeest continues the description:

73. Blussé: “For instance, Titsingh, the Dutch envoy to the court of the Qianlong emperor who humbly knocked his head on the cold pavement of the imperial palace in Peking in the winter of 1795, had previously, in his capacity of chief merchant of Deshima, kowtowed on the tatami of Edo castle in front of a an all but invisible shogun. In sharp contrast to the attitudes of late eighteenth-century British and Russian emissaries, the Dutch had no qualms about subjecting themselves to Asian court ritual” (18).

> It consists in kneeling down three times; in saluting at each prostration, by bowing the head three times to the ground; and in rising up after each third inclination of the head, in order to kneel anew. All these motions are directed by the voice of a Mandarin, who measures the time by regular intervals, in like manner as an officer exercising troops. (vol. I, 22)

In this passage, with its unexpected tonal transition from the strained courtesy of "to kneel anew," to its caricaturization of the supervising Mandarin as a cartoonish boot camp officer, Dutchman Houckgeest more closely approaches dry British humour than just about anything in Macartney's journal.[74] And while this irony of our writers' differing treatment of the subject may be beside the point, the difference itself is not. Houckgeest here gives a semantically scientistic, imperialistic description of a culturally vital Chinese custom: we can identify the passage's scientism in its ethnographic detail; its imperialist tinge by its, albeit gentle, satire of the "officer" Mandarin. Nonetheless, Houckgeest's description is characterised by a passive acquiescence to Chinese superintendence that never once appears in Macartney. When, months later, the embassy finally meets Qianlong for the first time, they again kowtow without hesitation or fuss (190). Given the Dutch Republic's unaggressive imperial stance towards China, Houckgeest's relatively unaggressive treatment of even its more peculiar social rites should not be surprising.

I say "relatively unaggressive," of course, in acknowledgement of a certain inherent aggression in scientism itself – and that is an important distinction. Scientism's amenability to imperialism lies in its need, and power, to conceptually reduce things, including peoples, to formulae; to soulless categorical types predictably replicating patterns. Such stereotypization is dehumanizing, and can easily pave the way for the ethnocentric presumptions of superiority that imperialism, at its most aggressive, requires to justify its violent subjection of the Other. But in and of itself, scientism does not *equate* to imperialism, and in passages such as this one, Houckgeest demonstrates the tone of a scientism inflected by the outwardly flattering, but inwardly wary, almost courtesanal stance of a Dutch empire quite aware of the power differential between itself and its patron. This is imperialism, all right – but not Macartney's imperialism. Not British imperialism. Blussé touches on this himself when he notes that:

> The fact that the Dutch chiefs were merchants on the payroll of the VOC gave

74. With a couple notable exceptions, to be fair, as discussed in our chapter on Macartney. Macartney's humour is a distinctly elitist one, and reaches its highest expression when he is sneering at the Chinese. Houckgeest here is also being satirical, but, significantly, he includes himself and his company in the comic tableau, in a position of deference. The diplomats' tones could not be more different.

> them considerable latitude to accommodate themselves to the rituals of the oriental courts and to serve as bearers of letters, rather than having to act as representatives of royal masters, as was the case with the English and the Russians. They were told to accommodate themselves to local customs if circumstances required this, without forgetting of course their personal pride as free citizens of the Dutch Republic. (Peeking into the Empires, 18)

I rather suspect the Dutch did not feel quite so free as Blussé indicates. Their willingness to conform to Asian court ritual smacks to me less of liberty than the caution of diplomats cognizant of just how much was at stake in dealing with a trade partner as wealthy and powerful as China. In any case, members of Nieuhof's embassy had performed the kowtow as well (Nieuhof, 123), so there certainly was Dutch precedent. Also, Portuguese missionaries had been accommodating themselves, with great and well-noted controversy – but also unprecedented access (for what little it impacted their prosyletisation goals) – to Chinese court culture for centuries.

Examples of this dynamic – this, shall we say, low-cal Dutch imperialism – are as common in Houckgeest as mentions of the kowtow itself. For instance, in the entry for the 20th of November, he describes receiving Qianlong's official invitation of the Dutch embassy to his winter palace. The invitation arrives with great pomp, transported “upon a kind of hand-barrow” by eight men, with a further twenty in attendance – and all swaddled in a cloud of incense that billowed from a portable altar conducted alongside (vol. I, 33-34). Houckgeest's mandarin escorts immediately kneel before the procession. “We followed their example, and did not rise till they did” (vol. I, 34) writes Houckgeest. Qianlong's invitation is read aloud, Houckgeest and cohort kneeling the whole time, and “as soon as it was over we performed the ceremony of adoration in honour of the emperor, after which we arose” (vol. I, 34). The embassy then receives much congratulation from the mandarins. As with every mention of the kowtow, Houckgeest in this passage is clear both to enunciate the situation in which the kowtow is required, and that his company performs it. But he does so without any need to justify the gesture, which he evidently takes as rational and respectful to Chinese custom without reflecting poorly upon the dignity of the Dutch.

This gracious amenability to Chinese custom would serve Houckgeest's embassy well during its travels. It would prove, in fact, one of the keys to the embassy's social success: the warmth with which they were received by the Emperor and his mandarins seems, in large part, to have been directly related to the Dutch willingness to conform to Chinese ceremony without resistance. For example, Houckgeest mentions that the day the

embassy met with Qianlong for the first time, after kowtowing and trading a few courtesies with the emperor, the party was unceremoniously ushered into a nearby garden:

> [W]hither we were conducted on foot... with such rapidity, that it was the next thing to running. Each of us was taken under the arm by a Mandarin, and dragged along in a manner which, in our country, would be considered as characteristic of the greatest incivility and rudeness, though here it would only be regarded as a testimony of zeal and attention. (vol. I, 190-191)

Given that Houckgeest follows this passage with a relatively scathing critique of the room in which his company is served breakfast, it is probably wise not to overemphasize his admiration of the Chinese; the Dutchman did not romanticise his Eastern hosts.[75] Still, Houckgeest's embassy clearly made a point of being courteous, generally swallowing their complaints; and, as in the passage above, Houckgeest's attempts to understand unfamiliar Chinese habits seem genuine. Following the embassy's disappointing breakfast, the Dutch were nevertheless keen to mingle with their host for extended pleasantries afterwards in the garden. During this interval, a couple of them (including Houckgeest himself) entertained the Chinese with some ice-skating in the “European mode” (vol. I, 193) upon a frozen central pond. Scenes of such easiness between Europeans and mandarins do not figure often in Macartney. And this, I believe, points to the difference in that imperial stance between Houckgeest's and Macartney's embassies; one that strongly tints their respective journals, despite the scientism that underlies both. It would be wrong to call Houckgeest's text unbiased, of course, but he, to my mind, far better approximates Clingham's adulatory reading of Macartney than Macartney does – and this, not because he is incapable of criticizing and even scorning the Chinese with Macartneyan vehemence, but because he is far more often capable of unqualified praise. Indeed, Clingham characterises Macartney's text by an “openness to the particularities of Chinese culture” (8) that is in fact present far more often in Houckgeest. Kowtows speak louder than words.

Houckgeest's Ambivalence

As an example of this openness, in his entry for December 15th, Houckgeest describes a series of “triumphal or honorary aches” in the vicinity of “Tsien-chan-chen”: “I made more particular enquiries about the signification of these monuments; and was told,

75. “It was so wretched a place, that if a similar one had been proposed to us during our journey [to Peking], we should scarcely have deigned to accept it” (191).

that they are architectural works intended to perpetuate the memories of persons of both sexes, whose virtues have deserved celebration and the homage of the public" (vol. I, 112). Houckgeest relates five types of monuments: 1) those who have lived a century or more, "the Chinese thinking, that without a sober and virtuous life it is impossible to attain so great an age"; 2) Children of great filial piety; 3) "Women remarkable for their chastity"; 4) Especially beloved and capable Mandarins; and 5) Great servants of the state, including those "who have made or invented any thing conducive to the advantage of the public" (vol. I, 113-114). That Houckgeest has gone to such trouble to explain the "signification" of these arches, spending several pages doing so, indicates that he considered them a striking enough production of Chinese culture that they were worth detailing. But this makes the plainness of his description, which includes no commentary as such, seem all the more unexpected. For the rest of his journal he comments on these arches wherever he finds them, noting light heartedly on December 28th: "Yesterday I saw only a single honorary arch, and this day no more than four, which seems to indicate that this part of the country has not abounded in persons whose virtues have been found worthy of commemoration" (vol. I, 144). Descriptions like these do not seem scientistic. The precision of the former does not seem intended to convey any particular kind of impression, it's a relatively straightforward depiction; while the latter reads as a bit of general banter rather than a stab at the Chinese. And proving this point, Houckgeest later reflects, "Whenever I saw these signs of public respect for virtuous beings, I felt a sort of confusion and secret pain, upon thinking that among us there exist no such marks of a just homage paid to valuable qualities, and calculated to excite emulation" (vol. II, 203). Such passages, that either do not merit an East-West comparison, or that do and favour the East, are more common in Houckgeest than Nieuhof or Macartney. This fact, alongside his comparative congeniality to the Chinese, gives the impression of Houckgeest's being not only less aggressively imperialist than Nieuhof or Macartney, but also rather less scientistic than they are.[76]

Only the former of those assessments is true, however – and understanding this is key to understanding Houckgeest's travelogue as a whole, and its place beside his British contemporary especially. One of Houckgeest's most habitual scientistic ticks is reference to time. Any journal will of course be organized by date, but Houckgeest is perennially

76. Compare this with Nieuhof's treatment of the same arches. The elder Dutchman devotes a short subsection of his "A General Description" to them, in Chapter X. His description is very minute, but almost entirely focused on visual description; being written in the dry, scholarly tone common to this section of his text, it does not occasion any of Houckgeest's reflection (197).

concerned with marking his observations to the very moment. This treatment of exactness as the hallmark of truth cannot but remind us of the assertion in his introduction that his method of journaling had been to “[commit] to paper, with the least possible delay, every thing” (xvii) he found worthy of record. And the timestamp of his adventures was apparently always worthy of record. “At eight o'clock in the morning we passed the hamlet Tein-v'ong-tsauy-sau, where there is a military post” – about which military post he makes no other comment – “...We had also on each side of us a constant prospect of a chain of mountains... which presented them to us in a point of view truly picturesque, and not to be surpassed by any thing of the same kind in any part of the world” (vol. I, 51). It is the simultaneous casualness and consistency of Houckgeest's comments upon hours and times of day that betrays the habit's unconscious origin. But it is also interesting how, in the passage just quoted, the mention of time receives almost equal weight in his description as the hamlet itself, or the “singular” mountains that surround it. Without actually describing these mountains, aside from their position relative to the embassy's course, Houckgeest avers that they are superlative – placing the mountains within the greater context of the world's most picturesque scenes is more important, it seems, than actually conveying any of the details qualifying them for this distinction. Dry, clinical, and more concerned with categories than actual description, this is scientism attempting aesthetics, and faring as well as one might expect. The scene's label (“picturesque”) is a containment, that fixes the landscape's value in relation to the beauty of the known, European world; a point more important than the beauty itself. If that were not the case, a more detailed and effortful evocation would have been made. And the whole endeavour is marked, conscientiously, with a time-stamp: Houckgeest's prose here is not that of the poet, but the field scientist making notes. The possibility that one of the many illustrations Houckgeest commissioned during his travels was meant to bolster this passage – or, more likely, *vice versa* – does not change the scientism of the text itself.

Later in Houckgeest's entry for this same day, the 27th of November, he continues both his close attention to marking time and his field note-like descriptions, in this case of the Chinese themselves. “Three times in the four and twenty hours they make a meal, which lasts little more than a quarter of an hour, and get but very little sleep,” Houckgeest observes, before admiring that, “No being on earth is fitter than the Chinese to endure fatigue, and to support a long continuance of labor.” Helpfully and authoritatively he explains to his audience that, so long as they are given “sufficient refection,” the Chinese will “always find new strength for whatever laborious task he may be required to

undertake” (vol. I, 51-52). These laborious tasks he then will perform “with vigour” and “a degree of gaiety which in other parts of the world is only to be met with upon parties of pleasure” (vol. I, 51). What begins as an observation of the Chinese sailors attending his party is quickly broadened into a generalization upon the nature of the Chinese. The nonchalance with which Houckgeest reduces an entire people to a feeding schedule and constitutional type is astounding – as also is the tone in which he does so, pitched exactly even between awe and condescension. Houckgeest's statement could be as easily applied to a beast of burden as a race of people; and that, perhaps, is not a coincidence. He here demonstrates Adorno and Horkheimer's theorisation of scientism as a method of control: describing a people not just in the terms of an animal, but specifically some variety of workhorse, whose strength can be regulated and capitalized on for the benefit of their overseers. A little good husbandry – a little “refection” from their keepers – is all that's required. Houckgeest's word “fitter,” with its connotations of both general physical fitness, but in context also of hard physical labour as nature's intended mode for the Chinese, is exemplary of the description as a whole. This kind of characterization is not singular, but both the scientism and ethnocentricity of Houckgeest's passage seems particularly transparent, and when read against his more admiring comments upon the Chinese, indicates a striking ambivalence.

A different approach to China's military strength

Like Nieuhof and Macartney before him, Houckgeest too makes careful note of Chinese military phenomena. Passing the city of “Chao-tcheou-fou,” he describes “about two hundred soldiers drawn up under arms in a single line,” come to pay tribute to the embassy. They were “in the following order: first, a body of archers, whose uniform was a white surtout turned up with red; second, fusileers with match-lock muskets, dressed in red faced with white; third, gladiators carrying targets, wearing blue coats turned up with red” (vol. I, 54-55). Compared to Macartney's typically biting assessments of Chinese military, Houckgeest's description seems almost dandyish, as concerned with outfit colours as arms.[77] But he *is*, nonetheless, concerned with arms: he specifically notes the fusileer's exact firearms. A few paragraphs later, he writes: “The city of Chao-tcheou-fou is a little smaller than Canton; but it may boast of an imperial custom-house, and of a garrison of considerable strength” (vol. I, 56). It is of “a very lively appearance” because it is located at

77. Compare Macartney (118-119).

a point where upstream and downstream trade cross paths, and goods are moved to either larger or smaller boats depending on their final destination (i.e. the upstream-bound trade is moved into smaller, river-friendly boats, and the downstream-bound onto larger vessels fit for sea) (vol. I, 56). Houckgeest's attention to the details of Chinese trade flow, and its garrison size, verge on the Macartneyean, but do not in the end cross the line into open contemplation of the city's military vulnerability. Exemplary of his urban military measurements, on the 28th of January, he assesses Beijing itself: “I can affirm in all my walks though the city I never met with any thing military except a small guard house, occupied by ten soldiers,” whereas “[a]t the gates of the city there are, perhaps, thirty or forty men” and their commanding officer (vol. I, 264). He expresses his surprise at this, especially given that “one of the persons of the English Embassy (Captain Mackintosh)” had given that “the effective army of the Chinese empire amounted to eighteen hundred thousand men”; Houckgeest estimates the number to be closer to a mere “eight hundred thousand” (vol. I, 264-265). As scientistic as Houckgeest's measurements here are, he, again, does not speculate upon the city's invasion.

He does, however, directly address this topic once:

> We may suppose, with great reason, we may even go so far as to consider it almost certain, that the Chinese will remain a flourishing people to the utmost limits of time that thought can reach; because nature herself must henceforth protect their country against all enterprizes and all invasions, so that it is impossible to attack them with any hope of subjecting them to a foreign power, or of ruining their country. (vol. II, 40-41)

Houckgeest then lists these natural protections: the “inhospitable deserts” to the north; to the south and east, rivers too shallow for sailing, gorges too narrow for marching, and rough paths “only fit for a single man on foot or horseback”; and to the west, “inaccessible mountains and impenetrable woods” (vol. II, 41). “Thus guarded on every side, the Chinese have no reason to fear... war... The only means then of disturbing them would be the keeping up of a secret understanding with a part of the nation” – but the complexity of their language prevents the enterprising European schemer from even this (vol. II, 41). Then Houckgeest comes to a remarkable conclusion: he does not mean, despite the hyperbole of his previous statements, to suggest that the Chinese might “jest with impunity of any attempt by Europeans” – he is very careful not to specify which – to “compel” them to accept “such reforms as are necessary to put a stop to the scandalous exactions of the Mandarins of Canton” (vol. II, 42). In fact, even a “single nation” might do so with “but little

trouble and expence" (vol. II, 42). "But," he abruptly concludes – as if Qianlong himself were peeking over his shoulder – "I think it prudent not to explain myself more fully upon the subject, and to pass over in silence both the project and the plan" (vol. II, 42).[78]

What can we make of this? The extremity of Houckgeest's vacillation is startling. His China is at first "impossible to attack," a nation-as-fortress, girt on all sides by natural defences; and then, two paragraphs later, a house of cards liable to fold with "but little trouble and expence." But instead of describing *how* a European nation might "compel" China to reform its trade system, he leaves the weight of the sentence to hang upon the word itself – and "compel" is a far cry from "entice" or "persuade." It is an ominous verb, that suggests military intervention by refusing to foreclose its possibility. The obliqueness of Houckgeest's statement, and his coy and somewhat anxious refusal to clarify it, finds no parallel in his British contemporary. Can we connect this, at least in some part, to the differing positions of late-18th century Britain and the Dutch Republic towards China? In hindsight, it certainly seems that the bold military assessments in Macartney's travelogue could have been derived of Britain's power, confidence, and economic predominance at the end of the 18th century. Houckgeest's Dutch Republic, by contrast, was in a very different situation, and specifically, the East India Company, crippled by debt and still reeling from the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1780-1784), was in a shambles leading up to its nationalization by the new Batavian Republic in 1796.[79] These differing national moods seem to be reflected in the differing emphases of Macartney and Houckgeest as writers of Chinese culture, despite the scientism that informs both.

The return of the waterwheels; a capacity for admiration

An especially interesting example of this occurs in Houckgeest's entry for the 4th of December. On this day, on the banks of the "San-chan-tong" river, he encounters several of the same waterwheels that Macartney had found marvellous, and he too falls under their spell. Houckgeest's description here is unusually meticulous, and spans several paragraphs. He describes the contraption's size: "The whole machine... is from eighteen to twenty-eight feet diameter." It is built entirely of bamboo and timber: "[i]n no part is the smallest piece of iron or any other metal used." He gives various details about the wheels,

78. He also condemns the scandalous exactions of mandarins outside Canton, observing that the "ruinous condition" of the dikes in "Tang-yang-chen" are due to Mandarins who "appropriate the money that ought to be employed in repairs to their own use" (156).
79. See Chris Nierstrasz (1-4); also, Duyvendak (4).

their arrangement, and even the exact number of spokes in each wheel (vol. I, 72-73). And he is equally enthralled by its ingenious mechanism of action. Partially submerged, the wheel is turned by the current, and:

> To move the wheel some flat bamboos, so cut as to resemble a board, and from ten to twelve inches wide, are placed externally at every fourth spoke on each side of the wheel, and between the two parts of the double rim which confines the spokes. It is against these bamboos that the current acts, while at te same points, that is to say, at every fourth spoke, but upon the band or ring that unites the two wheels of which the great wheel is composed, are tied thick and hollow joints of bamboo, which fill with water when the motion of the wheel plunges them into the stream. These joints of bamboo make, with the line described by the convexity or periphery of the wheel, an angle, which, as well as the length of the joint itself, is so calculated, that when the rotation of the wheel that has first raised them gives them an inclination downwards, they pour into the vessel destined to receive it the water which they have taken up from the river, and which an aqueduct afterwards conveys to the place where it is wanted.
>
> Such a wheel, when once set up, work continuously night and day, until some accident obstructs its progress. (vol. I, 73)

Set against the slack generality of Houckgeest's descriptions of Chinese countryside and architecture, this is an impressively exact passage. It epitomizes both semantic and thematic scientism, measuring the machine exactly, explaining the principles behind its function, and directly comparing it to European techne.[80] “[T]he mill answers the intended purpose as completely as the most complicated European machine could do” he notes with mild surprise; his superlative, “the most complicated European machine” emphasizing to his Western audience just how efficient the Chinese waterwheel is. “[A]nd I will answer for it” he goes on, “that in China it does not occasion an expence of ten dollars. It seems to me that the mere putting together of the pieces of which it is composed, is a new proof of the industry and intelligence of the Chinese” (vol. I, 74). Houckgeest “answers” for the cost of the waterwheel, because, as both a Western merchant and man of learning he can vouch for its worth literally and figuratively. And while the implication here at first seems to be that Chinese manufacture cannot “speak” for itself – that its ingenuity and efficiency is not self-evident – in fact, Houckgeest is generally quite impressed with Chinese feats of water management, and several times compares them favourably to Holland's dikes and canals (vol. II, 117; 125). His need to relate all Chinese accomplishments back to

80 As when he details the Chinese' answer to the wheels' lack of counterweights: they address this by artificially raising the velocity of the stream as it approaches the waterwheel by yet another sort of wheel.

European standards is perhaps Eurocentric; but overall, he is conspicuously less loathe to concede Chinese technical superiority than his British counterpart.

This is especially true of his assessments of Chinese agriculture, which are overwhelmingly positive. On the 15th of December, he writes:

> During the greater part of this day we travelled over mountains where not the smallest fertile spot escapes cultivation. The eye of an European is delighted at beholding the industry of the Chinese, who, rating difficulties at nothing, convert mountains into fertile fields, and change the inclined surface into level ground, by means of terraces of four or five feet elevation, which descend by steps from the top of the declivity to the bottom of the valley. But for their exertions it is evident that those regions must remain forever uncultivated. (vol. I, 110)

Houckgeest then continues to detail several other particulars: how each terrace is "secured with a parapet, and a little ditch to drain off the superfluous water" (vol. I, 111); how the highest mountains are fitted with "ample reservoirs" to insure against drought. He even finds great enthusiasm at the beauty of the scene: "the aspect was so disposed" to be "highly agreeable, although the ground was now entirely stripped and naked. How delightful it must be when wheat embellishes the surface, and covers it with a verdant carpet!" (vol. I, 111). But Houckgeest's aesthetic appreciation of the scene does not overwhelm his interest in Chinese efficiency; if anything, his awe at the scene's beauty seems to derive from his respect for Chinese agricultural ingenuity. And this is, in fact, a point of ongoing wonder for him. Much later, on April 1st, he admires the local "draught-board" arrangement of planting, writing: "Thus do the Chinese prove, in every part of the Empire, that they are in no way inferior to the Europeans in the art of agriculture" (vol. II, 266). Further, the Chinese are able "to boast that they carried that art to the perfection at which it is now arrived, whole centuries ago..." while European farmers even still resist innovations, being "slaves to habit" (vol. II, 266), an assertion Houckgeest defends with an anecdote relating to his management of the cows at his former Dutch estate in the province of Guelderland. Houckgeest claims that his cows "gave as much milk in the winter as the summer," to the great acclaim of his neighbours – and yet, none of them could be persuaded to take up his husbandry suggestions (which he does not detail). Elsewhere, he paraphrases missionary M. Grammont that the Chinese, "at periods very remote" had "published learned books concerning this first of all arts" – agriculture – "books, of which the translation would enrich Europe, by the depth of their theory, and by

examples deduced from successful practice" (vol. II, 287).[81]

In passages like these, Houckgeest's admiration of the Chinese is both plain, and indisputably based on an Adornan understanding of science as the mastery of the natural world; an achievement that he esteems so highly that he is willing to consistently defer to Chinese skill in this area. And not only defer, but also, and of course, appropriate. When he comes across a clever Chinese plough, he is direct: "I am resolved to buy one the first opportunity to carry out of the country with me, it being an excellent instrument for indifferent land" (vol. II, 114). As these various examples show, Houckgeest's most glowing opinions of the Chinese tend to relate to their agriculture; a fact that almost certainly reflects Houckgeest's own background. Having farmed rice in North Carolina for years, he was familiar with the agricultural and milling technology of his day.[82] The examples of his admiration for Chinese agricultural techne are innumerable: on the basis of the vigorous barley fields near the village of Fou-yang, he induces that "the farmers in this country know how to manage every thing with intelligence and economy" (vol. II, 239). He spends several pages discussing the kinds of cotton grown in China, their qualities, and their trade value (vol. II, 140-142). He carefully assesses the indigo cultivation in Tche'-kiang, and its suitability as a trade good, (vol. II, 199) – and etc. None of this is to imply that Houckgeest harboured no reservations about the Chinese – as we shall soon see – but of our three travelling diplomats, he is easily the least averse to openly giving the Chinese credit for their technological sophistication.[83]

Houckgeest's admiration for Chinese technological savvy, and desire to appropriate it, is not limited to the merely agricultural. "Among the carriages employed in this country is a wheel-barrow, singularly constructed," which Houckgeest then analyses with the same vigour that he had the water-wheels of the "San-chan-tong" river, detailing such particulars as as the wheels' frames being "made of laths, and covered over with a think plank, four or five inches wide" (96-97). Projections on either side of the barrow serve as room for baggage or passengers: "[a] Chinese traveller sits on one side, and thus serves to counterbalance his baggage," and if needed can balance his baggage between both projections and sit between, in the barrow, "on the board over the wheel" (96-97). "The

81. Houckgeest, however, and to his dismay, is unable to acquire any of these books, because they are kept as "sacred things" by the local officials, who cannot be tempted to sell them (288).

82. For more information on Houckgeest's agricultural background, see Duyvendak (101); Loerh (180); *An Authentic Account* (vol. I, ix; vol. II, 284-286).

83. Loehr writes of *An Authentic Account*'s illustrations of Chinese agricultural instruments: "The Chinese agricultural instruments represented, brought to this country as part of Van Braam's collection with the distinct purpose of serving as models, were no doubt drawn from life in Philadelphia, as they were displayed in Peale's Museum, then housed on the ground floor of the American Philosophical Society" (185).

sight of this wheel-barrow thus loaded, was entirely new to me. I could not help remarking its singularity, at the same time that I admired the simplicity of the invention. I even think, that in many cases such a barrow would be found much superior to ours" (97). Houckgeest "cannot help" admiring the Chinese barrow, and "even thinks" that such a barrow "in many cases" would beat out its European analogue: Houckgeest's qualifications betray something pained in his concession, on this occasion, of Chinese technological savvy. He is impressed, but not resigned to being impressed. Nonetheless, concede Chinese technological savvy he does, even as he appropriates it.

Of pigs, ladies, and the importance of "geographical knowledge"

And it is precisely Houckgeest's ambivalence – his ability to admire Chinese techne without finally relinquishing his ethnocentric worldview – that makes him such a fascinating comparison to Nieuhof and, even more so, Macartney. In his entry for December 10th, he compares the Chinese hogs of "Ta-ngan-chen" to those of "Quan-tong," noting that Northern pigs are "quite black, and apparently of a wild breed. Their belly does not hang down, their snout is short and turned up; and their ears are long and pedant. Their hair is also both thicker and stiffer" (vol. I, 95-96) – and from there segues immediately into a critique of the Chinese people: "It is equally easy to see that there is a difference in the men, particularly the colour of the skin." The men in this region are "much ruddier... than the inhabitants of the south of China"; but even more so the women, "whose cheeks are as red as those of European females, in the full bloom of youth and health" (vol. I, 97).[84] I will not belabour the implications of taking a comparison between regional varieties of hog as the starting point for a comparison of human beings. What is less expected is that Houckgeest nevertheless ends up extending his comparison to include the flower of Europe's "females." His description of the Northern Chinese bookends them between Chinese hogs and European women – some sort of missing link in the grand chain of Others. Whether his description was ultimately meant to be insulting or complimentary to any of the three parties involved is an open question. He seems unsure himself.[85]

84. Houckgeest was apparently quite smitten with these hogs; he mentions them again on December 19th, before referring his readers back to his former entry. Incidentally, this self-conscious command of the contents of his own journal strikes me as an example of semantic scientism, implying precision, consistency, and thoroughness as proofs of the credibility of his observations.

85. It is only fair to note that Houckgeest seems overall quite sympathetic to China's womenfolk, lamenting that "[t]here is no country in the world in which the women live in a greater state of humiliation, or are less considered than in China," explaining that the wealthy ones are confined to home, and the poor perform backbreaking labour with their children strapped to their backs (vol. II, 184).

In a similarly demeaning vein, and comprising one of the most notable instances of thematic scientism in Houckgeest's journal, Houckgeest describes an altercation between his embassy and their Chinese chaperones on the 25th of December, only days prior to arriving in Peking. Ambassador Titsing has decided that the embassy should decamp for the night in “Lin-ouay-chen,” afraid that going any further will cause the company to outpace their accompanying cargo, so depriving them of various niceties and comforts (vol. I, 134). But the Chinese, afraid that the embassy was not making good time to Peking, “endeavoured to play us another trick, and carry us twenty or thirty *li* beyond the place,” writes Houckgeest (vol. I,135). “By way of doing so they begged us to set off at two o'clock instead of three,” but Houckgeest realises that that is far earlier than necessary simply to get to Lon-ouay-chen. “It was evident that it would suffice to set off at five o'clock in order to go the ninety *li*... Perceiving that our opposition was systematic, and founded upon a geographical knowledge of the country, they changed their tone” and relented (vol. I, 135). These slight few sentences stand out amongst our three travelogues for how self-consciously they portray European fluency in “geographical knowledge” as a hard counter to Chinese “tricks.” Houckgeest is here very literally depicting scientific skill as a means of redirecting Chinese behaviour to bring it into accord with European wishes; his self-satisfaction oozes off the page as he recounts the experience. In light of the generally cordial, and even friendly, relations that he reports between his embassy and the imperial court, the passage stands out as a clear example of scientism as an ideology of control even in the absence of any pressing imperialist agenda.

“Master-pieces of art”: assessing Chinese manufacture

I will conclude my reading of Houckgeest by demonstrating that, despite his enthusiasm for Chinese agricultural (and sometimes other) techne, his opinion of Chinese manufacturing techne overall is low, and his pronouncements on this front assertive, scientistic, and among the most Eurocentric to be found in his travelogue. On Jan 20th he states tartly that the constant influx of European trade goods – “master-pieces of art” – should be enough to “convince [the Chinese] that industry [in Europe] is there carried farther than among themselves: but their vanity finds a remedy for this. All these wonders are included in the class of superfluities” (vol. I, 243). Houckgeest never specifies what he means by “master-pieces of art,” but it's just as well, since he is making a general comparison of European and Chinese wares; his vagueness emphasizes the conviction of

his judgement, which he takes for granted as not requiring qualification. And so, ultimately, despite being the freest of our travelling diplomats in paying compliments to the Chinese, and despite his embassy's being by all accounts more concerned to meet imperial etiquette than Macartney's, it would be wishful indeed to mistake Houckgeest's very real affection for the Chinese for a lack of Eurocentric bias. He is, after all, also the diplomat responsible for one of the most blatantly Eurocentric statements to be found amongst any of the travelogues under study. He praises the Cantonese that “by means of their continual intercourse with Europeans... they are in general more civilized than the rest of the nation” – and then is quick to qualify even this backhanded compliment, explaining pointedly that “this effect is circumscribed even in Canton,” and characteristic only of those who had social access to Europeans (vol. I, 246). So Houckgeest was no cultural relativist. And for all that he admitted admiration for the Chinese when he considered it justified, he was in the end firmly convinced of Europe's sum superiority. In fact, his journal's vacillation between warm esteem and sharp criticism of the Chinese is one of the distinguishing features of his work. And that is perhaps the greatest value of Houckgeest's travelogue in comparison to the former diplomats: undergird by the deferential political stance of the late-18th century Dutch towards the Chinese, his travelogue helps to enunciate the inflections of a scientism that stands in contrast most pointedly to that of his immediate predecessor, Lord George Macartney. So doing, it helps to clarify how scientism can be accommodated to various political styles and agendas.

Chapter Six: Benjamin Schmidt and the Curious Case of the Shrinking Author

Having examined now the scientistic inflections of three distinctly Western voices (as well as the rather more singular Sir Temple), it will be wise of me, before making conclusions, to evaluate an argument made by historian of the book, Benjamin Schmidt. I have mentioned Schmidt before: his *Inventing Exoticism: Geography, Globalism, and Europe's Early Modern World* has proven itself an invaluable mine of information about premodern Dutch travel literature, and Nieuhof specifically, and my own research has benefited immensely from his. But in his book, he makes one argument in particular that bears upon the premise of this thesis heavily enough that I feel it requires addressing directly.

In what soon becomes his refrain, Schmidt declares in the first chapter of his monograph that “early modern books were generally produced, not written – manufactured, not authored – and this process of production took place in well-organized ateliers, under the guidance of artisan-entrepreneurs” (47). Schmidt's central argument, derived largely from the works of Roger Chartier and historian Donald McKenzie, is that the bookmaking process, including all of its editorial and publishing facets – and especially as regards premodern Dutch works of geography and travel, the generic standards of the age – deserves greater holistic consideration than it is often given in literary exegeses (46-48). These latter, Schmidt argues, tend to prioritize a romanticized “text” as if it were overwhelmingly the product of the titular author. But in fact, he continues, the “artisan-entrepreneurs” who curated the collection of paratexts and images that accompanied these texts, and frequently intervened in the texts themselves, were at least as important as the titular authors in shaping any such book's final form, therefore conditioning the terms of its popular reception. Enthusiastically borrowing Chartier's term, Schmidt refers to this exegetical error as “the imperialism of close reading” (47).

The Importance of Being Attributed

Schmidt's argument is elegantly and engagingly reasoned, and his point that few – and indeed probably no – premodern books were the unfiltered expression of a single author is impossible to deny. But it is worth noting that if, as Schmidt paraphrases McKenzie, “forms effect meanings” (47), it is equally true that formal attributions affect meanings. It may or may not be that books like Nieuhof's *An Embassy from the East India Company* were seen as literary Athenae, sprung more or less fully-formed from the heads of their purported creators, rather than as works of expertly interwoven miscellanea “manufactured” by publishing ateliers. It is difficult to evaluate contemporary audience expectations on this point at this still early stage in the history of mass printing. It is likely that different readers would have had different expectations, depending on their educations, personal levels of familiarity with the book-making process, and any number of other idiosyncrasies. This doesn't make Schmidt's point moot, but it is important to note that Nieuhof's travelogue, however heavy a stamp his publishers put upon it, and whatever the actual provenance of its discrete parts, was still attributed to *Nieuhof*. To this end, Schmidt himself details the evolution of the terms by which Nieuhof's first publisher, the formidable Jacob van Meurs, describes, over the course of several editions, his own

involvement in the text:

> On the title page of the first Dutch edition of Nieuhof's China book, van Meurs fashions himself a 'Boekverkooper en Plaatsnijder' (bookseller and engraver), while in the French edition (also 1665), he fills the role merely of 'Marchand Libraire' (bookseller), and by the German edition (1666), he reverts to a 'Buch- und Kunst-handlern' (book and art dealer). (49)

I will leave it to those better versed in the languages mentioned to investigate how similar the native connotations of van Meurs' various titles are; but in the end, it would seem they all converge on the obfuscation of van Meurs as textual creator. And since presumably van Meurs approved them all himself, we can safely surmise that he was not interested in actually usurping the position of author. His “dilution” (70) of Nieuhof's text with foreign material does not change this.[86] Van Meurs may well have been, in Schmidt's term, an “impresario of print” (47), but it remains to be seen how his management of the production of Nieuhof's book would, at the time of publication, have lessened Nieuhof's claim to its authorship in the minds of Western Europe's reading public. Or if indeed it would have done so at all. Either way, if in the final instance it is more correct to consider *An Embassy from the East India Company* as the fruit of a partnership between Nieuhof and van Meurs, or even the output of an artisanal community, rather than the flowering of Nieuhof's genius alone – then so be it. At risk of glibness, all the better then can we consider such a polyphonic text as reflecting the belief systems and discourses of the culture that commissioned it, and to which it was finally – by someone – addressed. Even if that someone was not, or not only, the titular author. That Nieuhof himself was not the one to ornament his journal with the paratexts, images, and interpolations that comprise the final form of his “China book” (51), does not make the inclusion of these aspects in that final form any less intentional, or representative of larger strains of local ideology. After all, a primary aim of close reading is to draw forward those rhetorical motifs in a book that

86. “Digressive, meandering, often unspecific, and generally impersonal descriptions of exotic locales meant that the consumer obtained a book about a place rather than by a person. It demonstrates, further, the demotion of the author in deference to the bookmaker- publisher, who would have had a hand in compiling the text, perhaps even providing the titular author with the raw materials needed to draft these volumes. Even the ample use of pictures contributed to this end: by diluting the place of the text in a volume, the bookmaker weakened the role of the putative author of that text. The author became decentered, one of several contributors to a printed product, and had to yield a portion of the title-page credit to the graphic artists, mapmakers, and so on” (70). How Schmidt comes to know that the addition of names besides the titular author's on a book's title page implies a total levelling of any conceptual hierarchy between these names in the minds of readers, he never explains. He is right that Dutch geographies were collectively created affairs, and often marketed as such, but that the reading public wouldn't have been able to distinguish between editor/publisher, graphic artist, and author, in the cases that these various roles were attributed, seems to me unlikely.

suggest its underlying ideological frameworks and cultural narratives – phenomena which are discursive to begin with.

My own analysis of the paratexts of Houckgeest's *An Authentic Account* exemplifies just this. The various authors that contributed to the travelogue's paratextual material – Phillips; his unattributed French-to-English translator; Saint-Méry; and Houckgeest himself – all consistently invoke scientistic tropes to establish Houckgeest's credibility as an author. They insistently point to his scholarly nature, the empiricism of his observations, his commitment to describing China honestly even at risk of refuting others' descriptions, and etc. Marketing tactics alone cannot account for this; or rather, for such rhetorical gestures to be marketable they had to have already been meaningful, as referring to established cultural standards.

Are books only consumer objects?

None of this is meant to make light of Schmidt's concern for assignations of authorship. He is right to caution modern readers against taking works like Nieuhof's for direct transpositions of the titular author's views into typography. He is also right when he notes that “the fabulousness of the pictures, the framing of the narratives, the processing of the texts, and the assorted other clever mechanisms of Dutch-made geography... contributed significantly to their popularity,” and ultimately “shaped manners of reading and consumption” (55). But Schmidt's critique focuses so tightly on books as consumer goods that he neglects to address the extent to which even the most chimaerical books reflect and engage with their ideological contexts, as if market forces alone were sufficient to account for both the popularity and significance of premodern travelogues. As he puts it: “Narrative presence was undoubtedly a selling point in volumes of exotic geography – it was underscored particularly in books that derived from individual travel journals. Yet it was not an especially important outcome in the illustration programs that rendered Dutch-made books so popular” (105). Again, Schmidt makes an astute observation and then overemphasises it; as if texts such as Nieuhof's were reducible to a bullet list of selling points. In his attempt to free the premodern travelogue from the constraints of modern exegetical biases, it seems Schmidt has simply substituted a different set of modern exegetical biases. Regardless, the illustrations of such books of exotic geography, which habitually portray flora, fauna, and people like so many textbook specimens, are excellent examples of the deployment of scientific conventions to circumscribe by describing: to

reduce the Other to terms of the knowable, measurable, and controllable. To types, rather than individuals. Is this not the implication of serially recycling images of “exotic” non-human and human subjects in various unrelated books?

Another example of Schmidt's resolutely economic focus: he says tellingly at one point, while explaining the tendency of Dutch premodern geographies to bear extravagant paratextual bumper crops, that “volumes were assembled to usher the reader – *better, consumer* – through their complex structure and to offer an appealing way to sample the morsels of 'exotica'... housed within” (56). The italics are mine, but the emphasis is Schmidt's. And it is habitual. There are apparently no *ideas* in Schmidt's geographies, only “morsels” of pure entertainment. And that is the crux of my argument with his otherwise brilliant and deeply researched monograph. For Schmidt, it is not enough to reclaim premodern literature's consumerist dimensions – a worthy goal – but he must also force these dimensions so far forward that they dwarf all the rest. He does nod in the direction of the non-economic forces with which texts like Nieuhof's engage, explaining of Dutch geographies that:

> They were not entirely without an agenda – hardly feasible for the genre of geography – yet their angle and perspective was generically 'European,' and their scope and ideology were pan-colonial and hyper-imperial. Dutch geography pitched broadly, and, consequently, its influence was extensive. (64)

This is a stunning and sweeping statement, but Schmidt doesn't pursue this “pan-colonial hyper-imperiality” much further, settling finally on the (rather ironic) assertion that “colonial or imperial ideologies” cannot well be “extracted” from these texts because they were “manufactured by much messier, less straightforward, and more 'printerly' processes than critics have generally recognized” (68). That is, these texts were, to use one of Schmidt's favourite words, “hodge-podges,” albeit beautiful ones. Framing them in this way checks the undue significance of the titular author, yes – but only by replacing him with his exact inverse, a nearly omnipotent editor/artisan/impresario, whose strictly economic motivations then rise to take the place so recently inhabited by the airy-fairy concept of authorial intent.

But not even editor/artisan/impresarios live in ideological vacuums. It seems strange to me to think that the “messy, printerly processes” by which men like van Meurs manufactured books somehow took place in a magic bubble beyond the reach of any ideological influences whatsoever. It is the premise of this thesis that whatever forces shaped the production and distribution of travelogues as *books* should not be taken as

superseding in importance the forces (such as scientism, imperialism, etc.) that shaped these travelogues – to use Schmidt's and Chartier's distinction – as *texts*. Even if these texts are considered collective productions. To draw an impermeable line between the ideological contexts of books and texts seems as absurdly reductionist as conflating the two entirely. Markley, for instance, explains of an etching of Canton's ground plan reproduced in the 1669 English edition of Nieuhof's travelogue:

> This plate is neither a realistic representation of a cityscape nor a map: the plan employs its surrealistic geometry and weird perspective to model a demographic, economic, and political ideal. In its size and regularity, the alien city is 'other' not because it fails to live up to European conceptions but because it projects an unvariegated commitment on the part of its inhabitants to live up to Confucian ideals of good government and social order.

Markley is right to note that the presentation of Canton, with its extreme and minute regularity of layout, was here an exaggeration and an exoticization: the translation into image of a barely understood Chinese worldview. One that more closely reflects European expectations than Chinese realities. Is it also a literal spectacle of uncertain provenance, meant to enchant the Western gaze with its novelty, and so sell books? Yes, of course. But its deployment as a literally spectacular consumerist fetish doesn't preclude its origins in European ideology. And it is that that Schmidt's analysis does not seem to reconcile: however geographies and travelogues may have been produced, they – at least those studied in this thesis – were still presented with due lip service to scientistic notions of impartial, first-hand observation. Foreign places were translated into cartographic terms, located longitudinally, and mapped where possible; the nonhuman environment was reduced to a list of its natural (especially agricultural) resources; human environments were often described as lists of military vulnerabilities; where they were not, they were most often described as lists of commodities; and both nonhuman and human specimens were stripped of individuality and reduced to representative types. That these portrayals, both textual and visual, were not consistently obtained by genuinely scientific methods of observation does not change the fact of their appropriation of scientific language and methods of display – that is, their *scientism*. If anything, it quite heavily underscores the superficial appeal of science to a lay audience.

And finally, and to return to Schmidt's most general claim: I suggest that the collective and nebulous nature of premodern authorship in the geographic genre does not erase the titular author himself, and certainly does not nullify the resultant book as a vector

of contemporary cultural discourse. Indeed, if Schmidt's assessment of the consumer-oriented production of such literature is accurate, then, again, the publishing industry's regular utilization of the scientific rhetoric explored in this thesis indicates that exactly the opposite is true, and that the makers of exotic geographies – and their audiences – demonstrably engaged with at least one non-economic ideology.

Conclusion

I have, over the course of this thesis, analysed the travelogues of Johan Nieuhof, Lord George Macartney, and A.E. van Braam Houckgeest respectively. Each is an invaluable record in its own right of a particular moment in the history of Sino-European relations; preserving in amber, as it were, the details of a first-hand inter-cultural encounter. But further, together these texts constitute three vital entries in a larger ideological fossil record of great importance to the history of ideas; one that, crucially, documents Western conceptions of China from a non-missionary point of view during an era when non-missionaries rarely had the opportunity to make such observations. This is not to say that the resulting texts are somehow “purer” or less ideologically laden than the works of the missionaries – on the contrary, their value lies in the contrasting ideological lenses through which they portray China, compared with missionary texts, consequent of their authors' differing aims and priorities. As the records of Western European diplomats *in* diplomatic *situ*, these travelogues offer modern readers as intimate a glimpse into the Western imperialist imagination of their days, as it encountered and attempted to reckon with China, as exists in the historical record.

In particular, in these texts I have sought out examples of what Adorno and Horkheimer have called the “mythological function” of Western science: science as a means of understanding for the sake of controlling. It is this aspect of scientific ideology that seems most amenable to imperialist aims at accumulating wealth by, as Drayton has explained, both identifying new commodities, and helping to organize the manpower involved in the production and movement of these commodities. Such superficially economic goals – if I may paint a moment in broad strokes – led, in historical practice, to the European annexation of non-European lands and subjugation of non-European peoples; as for example in Dutch Java, or British India.[87] China, of course, was never

87. Nieuhof himself, in fact, as I mentioned during his chapter, gives a useful record of Dutch occupation of

annexed by any European power, but in the Opium Wars of the 19th century, it fell to British military might, and was forced thereafter to relinquish control of its borders and trading practices to a Western power for the first time in recorded history. Did Western science therefore cause the Opium Wars? No, not in any direct or uncomplicated way; nor does this thesis mean to suggest that the Opium Wars were some sort of inevitable ramification of the rise of Western science. But inasmuch as scientific ideology increasingly informed the worldviews and actions of premodern Westerners generally, then certainly it deserves to be scrutinized for its affects upon these ambassadors' behaviours, including their writings. And in Macartney case, it is difficult not to speculate upon how it may have impacted a diplomatic mission that ultimately only increased tension between Britain and China – a tension that would continue to mount over ensuing decades, before combusting in 1839 as the first Opium War.

Moving beyond Drayton's argument of the practical utility of science and scientists to empire, I would also add that the scientific drive to explain the world – not just the so-called natural world, but also the human world, the realm of culture – in terms of transcendent, universal principles and laws, has an innate tendency to treat individuals as types. A tendency which is fundamentally dehumanizing, burying the idiosyncrasies of the individual under the presumed traits of their class. Dawn Odell identifies this dynamic in the images of decontextualised Chinese figures in regional dress that pepper Nieuhof's travelogue. In these images, which she argues are representative of the visual depiction of foreign peoples in premodern “European books about Asia” generally, the figure portrayed becomes “a metonymic notation, a static single image standing for a cultural whole, rather than playing a role within a narrative of lived activity” (Customs, Clothing, and Mercantilism, 144). I agree with Odell, but think that this phenomenon can be discerned in textual as well as visual depictions – and so have made the close reading of such textual depictions in Nieuhof, Macartney, and Houckgeest central to my thesis. Indeed, this is perhaps where my thesis most breaks new ground – by attempting a sustained inquiry into the interrelation of scientism and imperialist ideology at the level of text.

To perform my analysis, I have foregrounded two aspects of these diplomats' texts in particular. Firstly, their thematic scientism, by which I refer to explicit discussions of Chinese science and techne – an obvious choice, given my subject, and one that requires little justification. And secondly, their semantic scientism, which refers to stylistic habits

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Java, wherein he details the commodities that first incentivized Dutch colonialization there, and describes their trials in maintaining control of the region, (26-29).

that implicitly invoke scientific methodology. Regarding thematic scientism: all three diplomats enthusiastically survey China in terms of its natural resources, and also its technologies – especially manufacturing and agricultural – and all three, at different points, attempt to appropriate Chinese technologies that they deem useful. All three make note of Chinese military strength, both how Chinese soldiers are outfitted, and in terms of numbers of soldiers and their allotment in various parts of the country. And, perhaps most significantly, all three diplomats make pointed observations on various aspects of Chinese scientific learning comparative to Europe that imply, as Adas has argued, the importance of scientific learning per se to their understanding of what constitutes a civilized people. (Nieuhof and Macartney, in fact, dedicate especial chapters of the final, encyclopedic portions of their texts to this topic; scientism at the formal level. Houckgeest's comments are more commonly interspersed into his narrative, but his journal too is heavily buttressed by paratextual material whose common theme is to establish the, in Odell's terms, "seeming scientific objectivity" of his observations.) Regarding semantic scientism: all three diplomats repeatedly emphasize the objectivity and honesty of their observations, sometimes by avowing it directly, and oftentimes by employing precise quantifications to imply its credibility. As an example of the latter habit: each diplomat puts great effort into making his observations geographically specific – and in Houckgeest's case, references even to the exact hour of day that he passed a certain locale or had a certain experience are the norm. These examples are not exhaustive, but they encompass some of the most habitual expressions of scientism in our diplomats' travelogues.

Despite their similarities, each diplomat's work is distinct, and though it would be reductive to attempt boiling down any of my close readings into a pithy sound-bite, a few generalizations can be drawn of each travelogue. Nieuhof begins his *An Embassy from the East India Company* with much ado about the importance of the travelling scholar to progressing the learning of humankind (i.e. Europe), by which he implies the importance of science to the development of culture generally; an idea that will have become taken for granted by the time of Macartney and Houckgeest. That his travelogue represents scientism at an early stage of development is reflected in the fact that he tends to interchangeably refer to various scientific fields as either "Arts" or "Sciences," which seems to reflect the still emerging institutional status of science in the mid-17th century.[88]

88. Herbert Butterfield's 1954 discussion of the relationship between, as we would define them today, the arts and sciences in Renaissance Europe continues to be relevant here. Butterfield argues that the innovative spirit of Renaissance painting and sculpture – "the recapture of the spirit that lay behind the achievements of antiquity" in the sciences (26) – anticipated subsequent breakthroughs in geometry, maths,

Nonetheless, it is clear from his commentary on the Chinese that astronomy, medicine, and mathematics especially were important to him as barometers of civilization. It is also clear from his painstaking, taxonomical lists of Chinese provincial cities and garrisons, their bureaucratic hierarchies, and the potential commodities native to a given region, that approaching China systematically was a primary goal of his. This systematization of Chinese phenomena extends to and in fact finds its fullest expression in the “General Description” that ends his travelogue, wherein he details various aspects of China's natural environment alongside Chinese cultural practices and feats of engineering – a gesture that I have described as “encyclopedic” for reducing China to a series of textbook-like chapters authored by a touring Westerner *for other Westerners to study,* and that I have also described as a mercantilist wish-list for its special attention to remarkable, potentially commodifiable plants.

Macartney's *A Journal of the Embassy to China* borrows from Nieuhof a tendency to survey land in terms of its natural resources; like Nieuhof, smaller nations orbiting China are considered in these terms alone, whereas China is also frequently surveyed for its military vulnerabilities. But Macartney's military assessments are more blatant than Nieuhof's, and he shows less interest in the native cultural uses of potential commodities than those which would have obvious value to Britain (such as tea and silk). He is more interested in Chinese agricultural techne than Nieuhof, however, and mentions it frequently, even making detailed blueprints of an impressive waterwheel used by the Chinese for irrigation. But where Macartney perhaps most stands apart from Nieuhof and Houckgeest is his frequent criticism of Chinese culture: criticism which spans from garden design to architecture, general scientific learning to various technologies – and of the latter, especially those, like silk weaving and printing, which he feels have been overestimated in Europe. Overall, Macartney's travelogue is considerably more disposed to scorn than Nieuhof's, and considerably less disposed to admiration than Houckgeest's. It seems likely that this behaviour belies the frustration of a diplomat who's sense of superiority was not indulged by a court he was certain he could impress; for in the end, and despite his indignation, Macartney's thousand gilt knick-knacks did not convince the Qing court of the utility of British manufacture. But his frustration also seems to have reflected a larger British mood: an anxious, even competitive awareness of Britain's worrying trade balance with what was perhaps the one other empire in the world at that time that truly rivalled her splendour and influence. It is the blatantness of Macartney's

and eventually the natural sciences more generally.

scientism and imperialism both that have made his work invaluable to this study.

The defining trait of Houckgeest's *An Authentic Account of the Embassy of the Dutch East-India Company,* at least when compared against his Dutch forebear and British contemporary, is its tendency to dizzying vacillations between earnest admiration and scathing criticism. Of our three diplomats, Houckgeest was easily the most fascinated by and appreciative of Chinese agricultural techne – irrigation (the same waterwheels that entranced Macartney), milling, and plough design are just some of the technologies he both praises and attempts to appropriate. He also openly admires practices such as the building of honorary arches. But at his most critical, Houckgeest was capable of matching Macartney for biting condemnation, and his criticisms of Chinese insularity and its affects on Chinese manufacturing technology are quite pointed. He also, less directly, complains of the “scandalous exactions” (42) of the Cohong, and alludes to the fact that Europe could easily put a stop to it – but then checks himself, having only teased at the sort of indignant tirade that Macartney actually gives (and that Nieuhof never nears). On all of these counts, Houckgeest makes a valuable, nuanced case study, for he routinely both confirms and denies academe's current predominant narrative that by the late 18th century, general Western opinion of China had soured.

The truth is less encompassing, and I think it likely that, as Nieuhof's broad canvassing of China seems to reflect the open-ended, optimistic mood of Dutch enterprise in his day; and Macartney's bitter indignation reflected the unhappiness of the British over their trade with China during his; so Houckgeest's ambivalence seems to speak to the Dutch Republic's anxiety over the precarities of its position as a world trade power in the late 18th century. Of course, none of our diplomats' views of China can be boiled down to their national zeitgeists alone (and Houckgeest's loyalties anyway were not exclusively Dutch). Blue, for instance, makes a case for the general decline in Western European opinion of China over the 18th century being in part influenced by the ascendency of the bourgeoisie class in Britain and the Dutch Republic during this period. Having established hegemony, bourgeoisie needs were no longer “convergent with those of monarchs who were promoting the centralization of their realms and trade” (72), and so idealization of the highly centralized Chinese empire “became increasingly redundant” (72). Consequently, “[t]he limits that the policies of the centralized dynastic state had placed on the growth of commercial profits were then increasingly resented” (72), with the result that former bourgeoisie romanticization of China slid into its inverse. Additionally, Blue argues, the decline of Jesuit presence in China during this period resulted in control over popular

discourse surrounding China shifting towards “social thinkers who were not specialists” (74) on the nation, which helped to fracture the Jesuits' more approving narratives. Houckgeest especially helps to complicate both of these assessments: for he was a bourgeoisie merchant *and* a specialist on China, and his travelogue presents a conception of China that resists clean summation. A conception notable for juxtaposing stern condemnations with earnest admiration – particularly, a perennial interest in appropriating agricultural techne. A gesture whose significance, coming from an experienced farmer and miller, cannot be dismissed as mere eccentricity. How Macartney and Nieuhof fit into Blue's schema is less clear – which underscores an important point; ironically, the same one suggested by Blue's own multipartite analysis: that the evolution of Western European attitudes towards China in the 17th and 18th centuries was not a straightforward process, and continues to resist comprehensive, Needhamian explanations. Ongoing investigation of the disparate influences upon this evolution are still required.

Besides Nieuhof, Macartney, and Houckgeest, I have also, for the sake of contrast, toured through several essays of one Sir William Temple, the greatest Sinophile never to travel to China. Temple's theorisation that nature was the impetus behind humankind's drive towards civilization folds human culture into the realm of the natural, striking a very different tone from scientistic conceits about civilization's being based on domination of the natural world. Perhaps the most unexpected ramification of this idea is Temple's argument that the study of “natural philosophy,” where this does not lead directly to practical technological innovation or greater mathematical understanding, is a distraction from the more useful study of moral philosophy. Therefore, it is below prioritization – an idea that stands in direct opposition to Nieuhof, Macartney, and Houckgeest's shared obsession with the state of Chinese science, and how it compares to European standards. With Temple's non-scientistic conception of China and skepticism towards the value of natural philosophy as foil, such ideological convergences between Nieuhof, Macartney, and Houckgeest become that much clearer. And while a single thesis does not and cannot prove beyond a shadow of a doubt the existence of anything as slippery as a direct line of ideological transmission between our diplomats, the current work's close readings – backlit by Temple – most certainly suggest an ideological continuity running from Nieuhof's travelogue up through Houckgeest and Macartney's.

Finally, following my close readings of Nieuhof, Temple, Macartney, and Houckgeest, I addressed Benjamin Schmidt's argument in *Inventing Exoticism* that traditional conceptions of authorship cannot be meaningfully applied to premodern Dutch

“books of exotic geography” (and by extension the later translations and republications of these that came to represent premodern travel literature more generally). Schmidt's analysis emphasizes the publisher's role in the creation of such books, taking Nieuhof's *An Embassy from the East India Company* as a representative case study. He details publisher van Meurs' interventions in both the visual accompaniments to Nieuhof's text and the text itself. By spotlighting as he does the role of the “impresario” (47) publisher in the production of books like Nieuhof's, Schmidt means to free the premodern travelogue from the limitations of traditional literary exegeses. Specifically, he refers to an “imperialism of close reading” (47) that aggrandizes the inputs of the titular author, and disavows any others – a gesture which Schmidt is right to contest for its historical inaccuracy.

But the extremity of Schmidt's analysis is problematic. For beyond merely recuperating the publisher as a vital contributor to the premodern travelogue, Schmidt's analysis essentially *substitutes* publisher for author, disappearing the contributions of the latter into the apparently purely economic motivations of the former. Besides how troublingly this act diminishes the travelogue's ideological context and content, I would also contend that this insistence on hierarchising its various co-creators is a missed opportunity to instead stress the discursive and culturally embedded nature of these books. And though my own research does not concentrate on the extent to which Nieuhof, Macartney, and Houckgeest's travelogues may have been shaped by editors, publishers, and others involved in the book-making process, my focus on the scientistic undercurrents of the books in question – including at the formal level, where the affects of the publisher's hand are often easiest to discern – in no way precludes the possibility of multiple authorship (if that is indeed the appropriate term to use). If anything, the existence of multiple actors making similarly scientistic, but otherwise distinct, inputs to these books (e.g. illustrations, paratexts, textual interpolations, translation choices, etc.) would only support my claim that scientism was indeed deeply entangled with imperialism in the premodern Western European imaginary. Rather than, say, some oddly coincidental quirk of the titular authors individually. And while this fact does not completely negate Schmidt's critique, it does point, I hope constructively, to some of its limitations.

And after all, scientism's association with imperialism was *not* a mere oddly coincidental quirk of Nieuhof, Macartney, and Houckgeest alone – as several scholars, whose works have provided the groundwork for this thesis, have established. In particular, Adas' research on the growing significance, beginning in the early premodern period, of

perceived scientific superiority to European self-image, and subsequent invocation of this superiority as a justification for European colonialization, has proven essential. Also vital has been Drayton's case study of Kew Gardens in its role as imperial administrative hub, and significant player in imperial agronomic policy. For a further accounting of the research that has made this thesis possible, I will refer my readers to the third section of my introduction. Perhaps the greatest value of this distinctly literary approach to a topic that otherwise falls most squarely into the history of ideas, is that it allows for direct and thorough consideration of the relationship between scientific and imperialist ideology at its most accessible level – the recorded word.

Avenues for future research

But my research marks only a beginning, and as such, one of the greatest helps this thesis can make to existing scholarship is to suggest avenues for future research. Some of the questions this thesis begs include: how has scientism affected Western Europe's view of foreign environments and nonhuman species? I have demonstrated, for instance, a habitual tendency in our diplomats to judge China's nonhuman milieux, botanical and zoological both, in terms of trade commodities. Was this an effect of the economic objectives of the embassies themselves, or at least partially due to the inherently objectifying nature of scientism itself? The latter possibility seems likely, but further study would be enlightening. The writings of traders and naturalists as they encounter and describe the non-Western world's nonhumans could be instructive here. Even Nieuhof, Macartney, and Houckgeest could be further pursued specifically for their descriptions of the Chinese nonhuman, a topic which has often entered only tangentially into the current study.

Certainly further studies of the influence of scientism upon European conceptions of China are also called for – this thesis has examined only British and (English translations of) Dutch travelogues, but a rich array of non-English texts exist. For instance, Chrétien-Louis-Joseph de Guignes' 1808 *Voyage a Pékin, Manille et l'Ile de France*, which Guignes based on his experiences as interpretor for Houckgeest's embassy. A comparison of Guignes' and Houckgeest's treatments of the Chinese using the methodology of the current study could prove enlightening – but unfortunately falls rather outside the language competence of the current author.

The most obvious suggestion for future research, however, is for exegeses of

travelogues written by Western European diplomats to other parts of the world. India, Japan, the Americas, Africa – what will be important is continuing the investigation into scientism's influence upon Western European conceptions of foreign peoples and polities.[89] After all, the romanticisation of science that can be found in the texts examined here represent only a few snapshots of a historical and ongoing process. One of the defining features of the modern Western mindset, I would argue, is the reification of science. What is meant to be a method of understanding the world – one premised on the fallibility of human observers that, therefore, seeks to constantly revise theories out of aggregate observations – has become magnified in popular discourse into a vaguely defined, incontestable source of "truth." But how objective is this authority really, and how benign? I do not presume to answer those questions definitively here; but what study of Nieuhof, Macartney, and Houckgeest makes excruciatingly clear is just how entangled Western science and Western imperialism have been since at least the 17th century. The resulting framework, considered as an object of historical inquiry, cannot be underestimated for its influence upon the self-perceptions of both Europeans and those they subjugated. Indeed, it cannot be possible to fully understand the history of either of these without considering their historical relation to one another, ideologically and institutionally. And, granting that the travelogues studied here represent this relationship only in the very specific context of premodern diplomacy with China – still, from them it is possible to see that science in this period was essential to imperial functioning. Not only as a *means* of appraising and appropriating Chinese technologies and commodities – to say nothing of making general reconnaissance – but as a crucial *justification* for pursuing these goals. But I will reiterate: there is surely much yet left to learn about the relationship between imperialism and scientism, the sceptre and the sextant. And so study must continue. Because, in a world still reverberating with the echoes of Western European imperialism, to leave unexamined the ideological supports that have helped enable its existence, and that continue to shape international relations, would be tantamount to a pardon.

89. Which is not to say that no research on this topic has not yet been done. See Sujit Sivasunduram's "'A Christian Benares': Orientalism, science and the Serampore Mission of Bengal," a case study of the relation between Christianity and Western science in early 19th century India. Sivasundaram's research concerns Revs. William Carey, William Ward, and Joshua Marshman, who "sought to bring indigenous traditions into a dialogue with European science, so that the former would eventually give way to the latter" (1), and is an excellent example of an approach to the history of Western science that recognizes its symbiotic relationship with other Western ideologies.

Epilogue

> Newton, for example, "revolutionized" physics and the so-called natural sciences by reducing the physical universe to a linear mathematical equation. Descartes did the same thing with culture. John Locke did it with politics, and Adam Smith did it with economics. Each one of these "thinkers" took a piece of the spirituality of human existence and converted it into code, an abstraction. They picked up where Christianity ended: they "secularized" Christian religion, as the "scholars" like to say – and in doing so they made Europe more able and ready to act as an expansionist culture. Each of these intellectual revolutions served to abstract the European mentality even further, to remove the wonderful complexity and spirituality from the universe and replace it with a logical sequence: one, two, three. Answer!
>
> This is what has come to be termed "efficiency" in the European mind. Whatever is mechanical is perfect; whatever seems to work at the moment – that is, proves the mechanical model to be the right one – is considered correct, even when it is clearly untrue. This is why "truth" changes so fast in the European mind; the answers which result from such a process are only stopgaps, only temporary, and must be continuously discarded in favor of new stopgaps which support the mechanical models and keep them (the models) alive. (Russell Means, Black Hills International Survival Gathering)

In July of 1980, Oglala Lakota activist Russell Means, standing before a gathering of protesters in Black Hills South Dakota, gave a speech about the value of Marxism (i.e. the lack thereof) to American Indians. In that speech, excerpted above, he offers one of the most concise, damning, and accurate histories of the evolution of European thought that I have yet encountered. Identifying Marxism as a continuation of European imperialism, Means observes that “The intellectual roots of a new Marxist form of European imperialism lie in Marx' – and his followers' – links to the tradition of Newton, Hegel and the others.” A tradition identifiable for its mechanical “despiritualization” of the world, and obsession with efficiency. Echoing Adorno and Horkheimer's description of Enlightment-spawned science as a mode of domination, he declares, “The European materialist tradition of despiritualizing the universe is very similar to the mental process which goes into dehumanizing another person,” before asking, bitterly, “And who seems most expert at dehumanizing other people?”

As Means' condemnation of the reactionary potential of Marxism for American Indians continues, gathering momentum, it leads him eventually to a stunning formulation:

> There's a rule of thumb which can be applied here. You cannot judge the real

> nature of a European revolutionary doctrine on the basis of the changes it proposes to make within the European power structure and society. You can only judge it by the effects it will have on non-European peoples. This is because every revolution in European history has served to reinforce Europe's tendencies and abilities to export destruction to other peoples, other cultures and the environment itself. I defy anyone to point out an example where this is not true.

To the best of my knowledge, no one has yet been able to provide such an example.

I begin my epilogue with these quotations of Means' because they highlight, with deadly clarity, and over a century and a half after the period discussed in this thesis, what I have tried unfailingly to underscore in my own research. Namely, that the history of Western European imperialism cannot be understood outside the context of the scientific ideology that supported it – in great part by helping Western imperialists to, as Means observes, dehumanize non-Western peoples.[90] Means' assessment, coming from a member of America's perhaps most consistently oppressed racial minority, is especially telling for its, dare I say, empiricism. He speaks from under the boot of Western imperialism. And from that vantage, he too identifies continuities that I have, within the delimited compass of this work, traced through the travelogues of Nieuhof, Macartney, and Houckgeest. What I have called their shared ideological lineage, a lineage of scientistically inflected imperialism, Means refers to as the European “mechanical model.”

But the point of this epilogue is not to reiterate examples I have already given. My argument has been made; what I want to do over the next few paragraphs is sketch one way that the ideological lineage I have traced amongst my authors continued on, past their works, into the 19th century. Means has already shown us that this lineage continued even further, into the 20th; he is competent to be left the final say on that. But that leaves a gap unexamined.

So let us mind the gap. In a sentence, in the 19th century, and immediately prior to America's global ascension, Britain was the most powerful empire on earth. Consequently, it influenced racial discourse across Europe – and the world. And Britain's trend of opinion towards the Chinese in the 19th century was unambiguous. Adas writes:

> With the Opium War of 1839-1842, the full meaning of China's military

90 We might here recall, for example, Odell's argument in “Customs, Clothing, and Mercantilism,” that images of Asians in early modern Dutch travel literature were of fungible, generic types, rather than individuals (144; and quoted in the present work, 166-167). Odell refers to these depictions as “metonymical notations” for their cultures; Means, I am certain, would describe them as despiritualized, dehumanized, and mechanized. They were proto-stereotypes.

> backwardness was brutally revealed. In a series of engagements on land and sea – rather modest confrontations by European standards – British ships and British-led Indian infantry routed the numerically superior Chinese forces... In what proved to be the most memorable clash of the war, [British warship *Nemesis*] single-handedly engaged a fleet of fifteen Chinese war junks. The British ship took the initiative by reducing the lead junk to a roaring ball of smoke and fire with a Congreve missile. As the remaining junks fled or were hastily abandoned by their demoralized crews, the *Nemesis* continued up the coast, forced the panic-stricken inhabitants of a small town to evacuate their homes, sank a second war junk and captured another. (186)

To recontextualise Adas' passage into the terms of this thesis: here we see Macartney's – and Napier's – roiling war fantasies come to life. Indeed, Houckgeest too hints at the power of European military techne to devastate China; and Nieuhof had been obsessed with the fall of the Han to the Manchu. Almost half a century before the *Nemesis* steamrolled an entire fleet of war junks, these notable European observers had, one might be tempted to say, prophesied its carnage. But *I* would say that the word “prophesy” is incorrect, and that these men helped lay the foundations for that carnage by outlining it, by validating it both technically and morally, in advance. Applying Russell Means' rule of thumb, what do we see here? The direct translation of a European “intellectual revolution” into an “exportation of destruction” upon non-Europeans. In this case, upon the Chinese, whose military vulnerabilities Macartney had assessed in the late eighteenth century – at one point, by way of an imagined scenario involving a single British warship terrorizing an entire coast.

But that line of thinking, too, only leads back to arguments I have already made. Adas goes on to write of the *Nemesis'* fiery victory, that:

> These and later military setbacks convinced virtually all European observers that China was no match for Europe and reduced the Chinese in the eyes of the European public to the pitiful creatures ridiculed in an1859 *Punch* Jingle:
>
> > With their little pig-eyes and their large pig-tails
> > And their diet of rats, dogs, slugs, and snails,
> > All seems to be game in the frying pan
> > Of that nasty feeder, *John Chinaman*
> > Sing lie-tea, my sly *John Chinaman*
> > No fightee, my coward *John Chinaman*
> > John Bull has a chance – let him, if he can
> > Somewhat open the eyes of *John Chinaman* (186-187)

Adas sees in China's defeat during the Opium Wars – a technological failure by any

account – the seeds of later British racism. He is right to; the ominous obsession with Chinese military strength that is discernible as far back as Nieuhof's *An Embassy from the East India Company,* and that has progressed to open appraisal of China's defences in Macartney's *An Embassy to China*, has here reached its dubious culmination: the collapse of an entire people, and the most magnificent single empire in human history, into the subhuman figure of “John Chinaman.” A technological deficit has been parlayed into a degrading stereotype. One characterized by verminous eating habits, cowardice, wilful ignorance – and a desperate need for John Bull's civilizing magnanimity. Attributions that would haunt Chinese people who found themselves living and working (in often deplorable conditions) in Western societies throughout the 19th century.

Adas continues: “Chinese ineptness at using up-to-date military technology provided the material for most of the anecdotes of bumbling 'natives' which European commanders and travelers... included in their memoirs to illustrate the great distance that separated the scientifically minded, industrializing Western peoples from all others.” I would only add to this that the logic of the literary trope in question was well-established even before China's military implosion during the Opium Wars. The entanglement of Western science and Western imperialism has given rise to a number of identifiable rhetorical figures and strategies since the 17th century – this thesis has considered many of them. During the 19th century, they only proliferated, and one way they did so was to coalesce into a distinct, distinctly racist image whose validity was upheld by centuries of cumulative scientistic denigration of Chinese learning and technology (and disavowed appropriation of the same). I have said before that Macartney did not, himself, cause the Opium Wars. Neither, himself, did Nieuhof. But these men contributed to, and in many ways exemplify, a Eurocentric, aggressively imperialistic strain of “study” of China that paraded as disinterested, scientific inquiry. But at risk of underscoring the obvious, this dynamic did not end with Macartney. It gathered steam in his wake. And eventually, it gathered oil and electricity as well. And its assumptions live on today, as Russell Means emphasizes when he, rightly, insists that no European intellectual revolution can be fully or fairly assessed, except by way of its affects upon non-European peoples.

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